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CHARLES READE, D.C.L.

A MEMOIR

CHARLES READE

DRAMATIST, NOVELIST, JOURNALIST

A Memoir

COMPILED CHIEFLY FROM HIS LITERARY REMAINS

By CHARLES L. READE

AND

THE REV. COMPTON READE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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1887

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TO

LORD LONDESBOROUGH; SIR HENRY JAMES, M.P.;

MR. EDWIN ARNOLD, C.S.I.; REV. C. GRAHAM;

MR. WILKIE COLLINS; MR. HENRY IRVING;

MRS. JOHN MAXWELL; MISS ELLEN TERRY,

AND THOSE MANY OTHERS WHO KNEW AND LOVED

CHARLES READE,

These Volumes are Inscribed respectfully.

BY THE COMPILERS,

C. L. R.

C. R.

PREFACE.

THIS biography is offered to the public as a compilation. It will be found to contain both unpublished MSS. of Charles Reade, and also fragments of his correspondence, with numerous extracts from his diaries. These have been selected with care, from a voluminous mass of literary and personal remains, individually by Mr. Charles L. Reade, the deceased author's literary executor and residuary legatee. In this selection he has been guided solely by what he believes to have been the wishes of Charles Reade and the reverence due to his memory.

The narrative portion of these volumes, indeed their entirety, apart from the matter which emanates from Charles Reade's own pen, has been written by the Rev. Compton Reade, on whose shoulders therefore devolves primarily the responsibility of authorship. The compilers deem it due both to themselves and to their readers, thus precisely to define their respective shares in the book as a whole. So far as regards what is here presented of Charles Reade's manuscript, Mr. Charles L. Reade

stands accountable; on the other hand the biography, as such, with whatever opinions are here hazarded on men and things, must be referred absolutely and exclusively to the Rev. Compton Reade, who has written from the standpoint of a near relative, of a foundation member—for a quarter of a century—of his uncle's College, and of a close literary association.

The compilers have with gratitude to express their obligation to Arnold Taylor, Esq., of the Local Government Board, for his valuable communication in reference to the authorship of "Masks and Faces," to which they desire to direct the especial attention of all interested in our national drama; to the Rev. C. Graham, Minister of the Avenue Chapel, Shepherd's Bush, for permission to give extracts from letters addressed to him by Charles Reade; to the Very Reverend Canon Bernard Smith, of Great Marlow; to Mrs. John Maxwell (M. E. Braddon) for her affectionate reminiscences of the author; and to members of his family, both for antiquarian details and also particularly for information relating to the boyhood and young manhood of Charles Reade.

C. L. R.
C. R.

Orsett Hall, March, 1887.

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A MEMOIR

OF

CHARLES READE, D.C.L.,

DRAMATIST, NOVELIST, JOURNALIST.

INTRODUCTION.

BIOGRAPHERS for the most part begin with an account of the ancestry and parentage of him whose life they reproduce. For many reasons we should have preferred to vary this rule. To have done so, however, would have been to obliterate much of the special interest which environed the old home and family circle whereof Charles Reade was for more than half his lifetime the central point. We will so far apologize, nevertheless, for the intrusion of genealogical matter, by relegating it to an introductory chapter, to be read or passed over

according to individual preference. In the one brief autobiographical sketch which exists among his very copious literary remains, we find that he devoted about a tenth part of its entirety to his pedigree; it would appear, therefore, that had he followed the example of Mr. Trollope, and bequeathed a compendious narrative of himself, he would have endeavoured not only to tell who his progenitors were, but also to show that they were not purchased commodities. He has himself given us our cue.

The author, moreover, upon whose individuality we here attempt to throw such light as may be afforded by our own personal knowledge, that of others, and by excerpts from his MSS., was never among the number of those who affect to despise heredity. He expended time and labour in verifying the ancient family records. No man believed more firmly in himself, none also was more ready to acknowledge indebtedness to his progenitors. When complimented on his sledge-hammer letters to the 'Daily Telegraph,' he parried this eulogium with: "A piece of good fortune befell us in the last century. My father's grandfather married the daughter of the village

blacksmith, and from her we are descended." That was how he accounted for the hammer of Thor his right hand wielded. It may perchance have been from the said blacksmith that he inherited the surpassing force which seemed to give him the mastery over all antagonism. He owed his imagination, however, his susceptibility, his sympathy with beauty, his dramatic instinct, to other and less coarsened sources. With the muscular texture of the rude smith were interwoven fibres of the Court and the Camp, the Senate and the Forum. He regarded himself—and rightly—as apart from class, yet would have turned in hot fury upon him who dared to impugn his gentle blood; indeed, his almost romantic reverence for his ancestors extended beyond them, to their acreage and mansions. More than once in his literary remains we find a mournful reference to the loss of Brocket,—entailed in strict succession on his own branch of the family,—so much so as almost to suggest that he may at one time, when Fortune was at her zenith, have indulged a secret ambition of re-purchasing that beautiful demesne.

We commence, therefore, his biography

with a brief analysis of those human threads whereof his nature was composed. Pedigrees, by those who do not happen to possess them, are commonly supposed to be shoddy inventions designed to bolster up a factitious pride. Happily, in the case of Charles Reade, his ancestry on either side for about four centuries is capable of exact verification, and we have at once relieved ourselves from the charge of snobbishness by putting boldly to the front its one plebeian element. We shall further tell the whole story without colouring or gloss. It is one which seems to confirm the doctrine of heredity by reflecting as in a mirror both his faults and his virtues.

He was the youngest child of John Reade, lord of the manors of Ipsden Huntercombe and Ipsden Bassett, and of half the manor of Checkenden in the county of Oxford, by Anna Maria, eldest daughter of Major John Scott-Waring, M.P. for the old borough of Stockbridge, Hants.* It was his constant boast through life that he was *par excellence* his mother's son, a Scott-Waring rather than a Reade. This was an injustice in more senses

* Disfranchised by Earl Grey's Reform Bill of 1832.

than one to his sire, to whom he stood indebted for whatever of good looks, stature, and humour he possessed. However, inasmuch as his mother's brain was in many ways the replica of his own, we will first in brief trace the threads of her genealogy.

Her name was Scott, Waring being added by her father subsequently to her marriage with John Reade. We have therefore to deal with the Scotts of Betton, in the county of Shropshire.

In the reign of Henry VII. (whose Chief-Justice and adviser, by the way, was Sir Robert Rede) there occurred a herald's visitation in and about the Welsh Marches, and the reigning Scott of Betton was required to produce his pedigree. He did so, alleging his direct descent from Balliol le Scot of Scot's Hall in Kent, son of John Balliol, *non voluntate hominum* King of Scotland. The heralds found fault with Mr. Scott's pedigree, but gave him time to prove it. The verdict subsequently went against the Shropshire gentleman by default, but it must not hastily be assumed that the plea was erroneous. It is a far cry from Shrewsbury to Maidstone, and no doubt

in the middle ages proofs of pedigree depended largely for their registration on the ability of the heritor to disburse largesse to the heralds. Be that as it may, it has been a steady tradition with the Scotts that their real name is Balliol, and if that be true, then Charles Reade could claim consanguinity with the royal house of Scotland.

In the pedigree of the Scotts after Henry VII.'s reign we find but few names of note. A Scott in the last century married a Miss Sandford of the Isle, a family of remote antiquity, boasting descent from Charlemagne, and Charles Reade's great-grandfather Scott wedded a Miss Waring of Ince. This, as it proved, was a great match, for Miss Waring's son, Mrs. Reade's father, eventually inherited the entirety of the Waring estates, which when capitalized gave a grand total of a quarter of a million sterling; and had they been preserved, inasmuch as Ince is now yielding coal abundantly, would have produced at least half that amount per annum in rents and royalties. That, however, was not to be. John Scott went to India as a mere lad in the service of the Company. He rose to be Major, and became

the military secretary and friend of Warren Hastings, then Governor-General. He has been termed Hastings' evil genius. The statement should be inverted; but of that anon.

While yet a subaltern in the Madras army young Scott met a Scotch girl, who, if an ivory miniature is to be trusted, must have been supremely lovely. Miss Blackrie was the only daughter of the Surgeon-General of India, who in his youth had fought as an officer in the army of bonnie Prince Charlie; but when the romance of rebellion collapsed at Culloden, exchanged the service of Mars for that of Œsculapius, and was holding a position of profit in consequence. By this lady Major John Scott had two daughters, Mrs. Reade and Mrs. Faber; and two sons, Edward, the elder, who subsequently became a distinguished Bengal Civil servant, and Charles, who died young. He resigned his appointment upon hearing of the virulent attacks made upon his chief by Sir Philip Francis, and entered Parliament, burning with zeal to rebut the slanders which Sir Philip's rancorous hatred had invented and spread broadcast against his friend.

Lord Macaulay, with his usual inaccuracy, affirms in his essay, that Scott was in the pay of Hastings. Major Scott on his father's death inherited property in Shropshire; his wife's fortune was about £20,000, and he had saved money in India. When he left India Mr. Hastings was his debtor, and continued so for many years. The accusation that he was paid for the services he rendered to his friend with such cordial enthusiasm was false, and all the more ludicrous because at the moment when he was accused of plundering Warren Hastings he had inherited the vast estates of Mr. Waring, and was the wealthier man of the two. Charles Reade's mother, who was passionately fond of her father, wrote a calm letter to the Whig historian, informing him of the facts, which letter was never acknowledged, while the mistatement in the first remained uncorrected in the subsequent editions. Moreover, Macaulay gibbets the voluble Major for calling Burke a reptile, but omits to state that this amenity was evoked by Burke having previously styled him a jackal. Major John Scott-Waring has sins to answer for, but he was lavishly generous, a man of honour, and

one of the readiest debaters in a brilliant House of Commons.

The Major's social life was in some respects more important than his political. He was an intimate friend of the Prince Regent and his Royal brothers, none the less so, perhaps, because his second and third wives chanced to be members of the dramatic profession. The advocates of heredity might assuredly find a strong confirmation of their doctrine in the circumstance of grandfather and grandson being equally stage-struck. Not without sufficient cause did Charles Reade boast his close affinity with the Scott-Warings.

It was in a cultured atmosphere, therefore, that Charles Reade's mother passed her girlhood. She knew every one. The Princes and Princesses, Mr. Pitt, Sir Jonah Barrington, Charles and Robert Grant, Grattan and Sheridan, the former of whom dubbed her "My pretty Puritan." She was a constant *habituée* of the Ladies' Gallery in the House of Commons. "Mr. Burke," she was wont to declare in after years, "would not now be listened to. His brogue was absurd. He persisted in calling the Begum, the 'Baygum,'

though every one even then laughed." Her anecdotes of the Pitt and Regency period were most racy, and she took so keen an interest in the Hastings trial as to have passed not merely hours but days in Court.

Being on a visit at the country-seat in Oxfordshire of Lord Charles Spenser, she accompanied her host and hostess to the Assize ball, and danced with a young gentleman commoner of Oriel the whole evening. The acquaintance thus formed ripened into intimacy, and ended in her marriage with Mr. Reade, and her settling down at Ipsden House as its *châtelaine*, celebrating her golden wedding there, and beneath its eaves giving birth to son Charles.

On the mother's side, therefore, Charles Reade inherited his dramatic instinct, and withal a vein of good honest Puritanism. But if he was the son *par excellence* of Grattan's pretty Puritan, he was also the grandson of Prince Florizel's *convive* and boon companion, and, be it added, the grandson of the braw young Highlander who did battle for bonnie Prince Charlie—a gentleman, whose portrait, by the bye, suggests the student rather than

the hero; but then it was painted in the days of his Surgeon-Generalship, after he had, doubtless, schooled his features into an expression resembling that of Lord Chancellor Thurlow.

From the fine old English gentleman his sire Charles Reade inherited qualities of a very different character. The Squire was a Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*, and as he was, so also for the most part were the men whose name he had inherited. Among the gentlemen of Oxon, Berks, Bucks, Herts, and Gloucester, none could adduce a braver record of loyalty to Church and State than the race styled indifferently Le Rede, Rede, Reade, and—this only in the solitary instance of a fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, who dropped the final "e"—Read, albeit General Meredith Read, who represents the American branch of the family, has also elided the characteristic letter.

In the year 1460, William of Waynflete, being about to build Magdalen College, Oxford, received from a neighbouring landowner the substantial offer of stone from his quarry of Taynton on the borders of Oxon and Gloucestershire. In the deeds of the last

century this estate of Taynton, subtending the superb Royal Forest of Wychwood, is styled "the ancient inheritance," and it remained in the possession of the family till 1868, when it was willed away by the late Sir John Chandos Reade to his servant, Joseph Wakefield. The donor of stone from the Taynton quarry to Waynflete was Sir Edmund Rede, who is styled Baron of Boarstal, and was himself both an ardent churchman and a lover of architecture. He rebuilt a large portion of Dorchester Abbey, the noblest of Oxfordshire churches, and Boarstal Tower, at the foot of Brill Hill, remains as a monument of his taste. The tower was probably erected by the same guild or company of masons that erected Magdalen College. There must have been an Italian among them, or else, as is probable, Sir Edmund himself had crossed the seas, for though the outline of the tower is late perpendicular, the detail is renaissance. Sir Edmund's uncle was Bishop of Chichester, and his father a benefactor to the Abbey of St. Albans. Whether he ever sat in the House of Lords as Baron of Boarstal is dubious, but that indisputably was his style,

and the Fellows of Magdalen, up to the date of the Reformation, said masses for the repose of his soul. So far as we can gain a glimpse of his character through the long vista of ages, this first benefactor of Magdalen College seems to have been a zealot, large of heart and chivalrous withal. He lived a celibate life, and his estates passed to his nephew, Sir Robert Le Rede, who resided at Beedon in Berks, and was in the same year Sheriff of Oxon, Bucks, and Berks. Sir Robert le Rede was succeeded by his son William, who married into the family of Beaumont of Cole Orton, the direct descendants of King Henry III. His son and heir, Thomas Rede, wedded the daughter of Sir William Hoo of the Hoo in Herts, whose son was the uncle of Queen Anne Boleyn, and created Baron Hoo and Hastings. But the most illustrious of the name was Sir Robert Rede, founder of the Rede lecture in the University of Cambridge, Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas, Executor of the will of Henry VII., and one of the guardians of King Henry VIII. during his minority. Sir Robert obtained a fresh grant of arms, which have been borne ever since by the family,

and are quite distinct from the coat of the Barons of Boarstal. It was at one time attributed erroneously to his influence that on the dissolution of the monasteries, the Barton estate at Abingdon, consisting of the palatial abbot's residence and pleasaunce, came into the possession of William Rede of Beedon, the purchaser in 1539 of the Manors of Ipsden Huntercombe and Ipsden Bassett. As a matter of fact, the Barton estate was acquired by purchase. Ipsden became the dower of his granddaughter Catherine, who married a Mr. Vachell. The inventory of their furniture is still preserved at Ipsden; but, unluckily, the bridegroom being a Popish recusant, two-thirds of the rental of Ipsden during his lifetime were forfeited to the Crown. Mrs. Vachell died childless, and Ipsden at her death was inherited by her nephew, Sir Thomas Reade.

Sir Thomas succeeded his father at Barton Court, as the Abbatial Palace was renamed, and married the only daughter of a Spanish Adventurer, Sir John Brocket, of Brocket Hall, Hatfield, son-in-law of Sir John Lytton of Knebworth. Barton being the appanage of the elder son, the second son, John, obtained

his mother's estate, and as the owner of Brocket was created a Baronet in 1625, which honour expired with his grandson, who, as the monument in Hatfield Church tells us, died while on his travels abroad, at the early age of twenty-two, unmarried,* and at his death Brocket Hall passed to his sisters as coheiresses.

Sir Thomas Reade's elder son married a daughter of Sir Gilbert Cornewall, Baron of Burford, in Shropshire, the direct lineal descendant — with the bar sinister — of King John. This lady's sister had wedded Speaker Lenthall, a fortunate circumstance for at least one Reade, as events proved, for the times were troublous, and true to their traditions, the junior members of the family were ardent Church and State men. They had given to the former, for old Sir Thomas, following the example of Sir Edmund of Boarstal, had built an aisle in St. Helen's Church, Abingdon, and had benefited by the latter. Hence, when, later on, the civil war broke out, none were more devoted to the losing cause.

* The tradition is that he formed one of the suite of the Pretender. He died in Rome of small-pox.

Compton Reade stands out in the history of the family at this epoch in bold relief. He was the eldest son and heir to Barton and Beedon, with the ancient estate at Taynton, while his next brother Edward was heir of Ipsden, and heir presumptive of Brocket Hall. At the age of nineteen this fine young cavalier raised a regiment of horse for the King, which formed a contingent of the splendid cavalry of Prince Rupert. There is a record in the Bodleian Library of his personal encounter with Colonel Barrett of the Parliamentary forces. He was not only present at the earlier battles of the campaign, but also at the siege of Worcester, after which crowning mercy to the Parliamentarians, although the Royal Standard was down, he defended Barton Court against the guns of Fairfax till it was—as Dr. Plot puts it—burnt over his head. Years ago they used to show a cannon-ball embedded in the grey masonry of the ruins of this noble pile; but Barton Court and the heroism of its young master have long been forgotten.

Thanks to the influence of Speaker Lenthall, Compton's life was spared, as also that of his younger brother Edward, who had been

his lieutenant. Doubtless they had a bad time of it during the Commonwealth; but at the Restoration Compton was rewarded with a baronetcy and a grant of money by Parliament as a solatium for the loss of Barton. At the request of the King, he invested this lump sum in the purchase of the Royal residence of Shipton Court, near Wychwood Forest, and adjoining his lands at Taynton. To reveal an ugly secret—the "Merrie Monarch" had bestowed Shipton on one of the ladies of his Court, and this personage preferred ready money to a gabled residence with the privilege of shooting bucks. It was very much what we should call a job, but Compton got a new home and the lady her money, all at the expense of the British taxpayer, so everybody was pleased all round.

Young Edward, however, did not fare so well. He, poor fellow, was not an eldest son, but had borne the risks of loyalty, and, worse still, had mortgaged Ipsden up to the hilt. The old house where Catherine Vachell had lived was tumbling to pieces for lack of repair; and instead of being granted largesse by a complaisant Parliament, he found himself under

lock and key in Oxford Castle for debt. There exists some very strange correspondence anent this ill-starred cavalier, who, by the bye malgre his reverses, contrived to marry four wives. One letter is from his detaining creditor, addressing him as Right Worshipful Sir, and politely hoping that his health does not suffer from his incarceration. Another is from the old cavalier himself to one of his wives, petulantly grumbling because she had neglected to forward his leather-breeches. A third is from his eldest son—another Compton, who was fellow of St. John's, expressing a hope that number four might be a lass with a little money. Edward lived to a green old age in spite of his misfortunes, leaving his eldest surviving son his estate. His younger son, Philip Edward, was a poet, whose erotic verses have unfortunately been lost, and also much given to experiments in metallurgy, at a place called Braziers, hard by Ipsden, with the design of discovering the philosopher's stone.

Philip Edward's nephew, however, who shortly after, at the age of sixteen, inherited Ipsden, made that discovery, though not through the medium of metals. Entering,

when he attained his majority, on a mortgaged estate, with a ruinous mansion, and little of any value except the fine stock-timber in the park, he registered a resolve to retrieve the fortunes of his branch of the family by industry and thrift. His property ran for four miles in an unbroken line, three-fourths being grass and corn land, and one-fourth wood. At that time—it was the commencement of the last century—wheat was gold, and the soil of Ipsden produced magnificent cereals. In order to obtain capital, he felled all the timber in his park, pulled down the mansion, erected new farm buildings, broke up the grass, and began farming on a large scale. His books remain to show how little by little he paid off first one mortgage, then another, then cleared the estate, then enlarged what had been the ancient manor-house before his ancestor had built a mansion for Catherine Vachell, and finally added three farms to his acreage. His portrait represents a man who could drive a hard bargain; possibly he did sometimes, but he could boast with truth that he had found out the real philosopher's stone.

He could not, however, have been altogether

hard-natured, for there remains a pane of glass whereon he had cut with a diamond "Bridget Brigham has no faults." That was in his early youth. He married the same faultless Bridget, who was the daughter of the Squire of Cane End, and years after, when she lay under the sod in Ipsden churchyard, mysteriously disappeared one fine day; so also did Martha Bartholomew, the daughter of the village blacksmith, whose sister subsequently married Mr. Thomas, the Vicar of Ipsden; and when Squire John returned, Martha was by his side as Mrs. Reade. Wonderfully lovely, so the tale goes, was the bride, as also her sister. Anyhow, the Squire thought so, and in the days of his prosperity too. She bore him children, but did not outlast her beauty. They went in state with four horses and the family coach to visit his cousin, Sir John, at Shipton Court, and she died during her visit. The Squire did not long survive her, and at his decease Ipsden went to his grandson, then a child of two years old.

We have already adverted to the story of this same child, Charles Reade's father. He was educated at Rugby and Oriel, was during

part of his life master of his own harriers, and though pressed to enter Parliament as the friend of such men as Lord Charles Spencer, Vansittart, afterwards Lord Bexley, Lord Chancellor Thurlow, and Warren Hastings, steadily refused to abandon his country life and field sports. But, if he lost a splendid chance, no man was a wiser or a kindlier father. His seven sons worshipped him for his noble bearing, his manliness, conscientiousness, and ready wit. Ipsden House, though the least pretentious of residences, attracted men of station, men of letters, and the best minds of the university. Among the guests whose names recur to memory haphazard among the visitors there, may be enumerated—besides Warren Hastings and Lord Thurlow—George Grote, Frederick Faber, Wilberforce and his sons Robert, Samuel, and Henry, Lord Lytton, Bishops Barrington, Hampden, Charles Baring, Jacobson, the two Sumners, Doctors Macbride, Plumptre, Ellerton, Cadogan, and Kennicot. The genius loci was both clerical and literary. The Squire never forgot his scholarship; and his wife, besides being the most brilliant of conversationalists, read every

book that came out. Whatever Ipsden House was, it could not be charged with bucolic dulness. Charles Reade was born into a refined family circle, for his mother had the *bel air* of the Court, and his father was a gentleman of the old school.

We have thus roughly enumerated the leading threads which went to form the individuality of the dramatist and novelist. On his father's side he boasted the blood of the Beaumonts, descended from King Henry III., and of the Cornewalls, through a morganatic marriage from the King of the Romans, son of King John. His direct ancestors had been Catholics and High Churchmen; his parents were Low Church people. The race had produced a lawyer of eminence, besides courtiers and cavaliers. With them he mingled the blood of Brocket the adventurer and Bartholomew the smith, while he combined the idiosyncrasies of Edward Reade the spendthrift, and old John Reade, the self-help man, who saved the Ipsden Reades from ruin. On his mother's side he may possibly have inherited a strain of the old Balliol blood; but the Scotts, being dwellers on the Welsh Marches, must have been more

or less Cambrian, and Mrs. John Reade's mother was a Highland lassie. There were points of resemblance, undoubtedly, between the author of 'Griffith Gaunt' and 'A Terrible Temptation' and his grandsire, the Epicurean major; but the grandson was immeasurably his maternal grandfather's superior.

Being, as we have seen, a blende of inequalities—of Blue and Red blood, of the Farm and of the Court, of Catholic and Calvinist, of Epicure and Ascetic, of Spendthrift and Miser, of Adventurer and Stay-at-home, of fighting Cavalier and homely Artisan, Charles Reade was, perhaps necessarily, a mass of contradictions. Assuming, for argument's sake, that the attributes of these various ancestors with special intensity concentred in his person, so complex an amalgam could hardly be commonplace; nevertheless, with all his eccentricity, he never descended below his own level, which, as he would have told you, was that of a man of ancestry, though, owing to the accident of being *natu junior*, not also of acres. Whether genius, or, as Trollope sneered, only "almost a genius," he lived, as he was born, a gentleman, and died a Christian. To his

country he gave the product of a brilliant and independent brain, and he rescued an old name from obscurity. We all owe him a debt, we of the English-speaking races, but especially those of his own kith and kin, for if a man in his faults, he was more than a man in his virtues.

"In memoriâ eternâ erunt justi.
Ab auditione malâ non timebunt."

CHAPTER I.

CHARLES READE'S MOTHER.

THE Gracchi, who were the moral politicians of Republican Rome, the Wesleys, the moral religionists of monarchic England, both owed their superiority to the formative influence of their mothers. And these phenomenal mothers were pre-eminently human creatures of flesh and blood, brain and force, as well as of sweetness and light. They were not nuns; they were not hysterical; nevertheless, they were much the reverse of commonplace, while their ambitions soared aloft, and were all the nobler because of being not for themselves but for their offspring. They desired to see their sons both great and good; not great only, but great and good; not good only, but above their fellows in intellectual capacity. They have their reward. History speaks of no

women in terms of such reverence. You must obliterate the records of the past before you can abrogate their fame; indeed, whatever Rome owed to the Gracchi she owed to the Spartan virtues of the woman who gave them birth; and our national debt to the Wesleys, the magnitude of which we hardly as yet can realize, may be carried back to the homely parson's wife who trained them to be truthful and God-fearing, temperate and brave.

Like them, the mother of Charles Reade was no common woman. Born under the torrid sun of Madras, immersed while yet a girl in the life of politics, society, and the Court, she was before all things a lady. Haydn taught her music, and Sheridan epigram and repartee. Her manner was perfect, and her conversational powers so extraordinary as to have fascinated so superior a master of rhetoric as Samuel Wilberforce. There never was a more omnivorous devourer of books, yet though she read incessantly during her span of ninety years, she never varied by one iota the strong opinions formed in early life, opinions wherewith she indoctrinated every one of her eleven children, and that not super-

ficially, but rather as a matter of unalterable conviction. Being, however, essentially a woman of fashion, her religion was tempered by worldliness. "My mother," aphorized her son Charles, "is pre-eminently feminine. She is consistent in her inconsistency."

It was on the eve of the great French Revolution that she was married to John Reade, in the old parish church of Bromley in Kent, and on the same day travelled with her squire to Ipsden, where, *ne cretâ careat pulchra dies notâ*, she planted a larch on the lawn. The quaint old house, which had sufficed for thrifty John Reade, her husband's grandsire, did not at all meet her ideas. It was by no means, to employ her own terminology, "sufficiently genteel." The red-brick and flint-stone dressings offended her eye, accustomed alike to the "bungalows" of the East and to the Georgian architecture of suburban London. Hence her first act was to paint the old house a garish white, and her next to throw out enormous bow-windows of mahogany, whereby the two chief reception-rooms were enlarged, but the house itself was invested with the appearance of a villa. After

that she burnt several family portraits which were not up to her æsthetic level, exchanged the huge mediæval salt-cellar, which had been used at audit dinners to the tenants, for a teapot, and settled down to a long reign.

At first Ipsden House was merry enough. Grattan had styled her "My pretty Puritan," but there was not much of the latter quality conspicuous either in her or her squire, whose indiscipline had not been largely appreciated by the fellows of his college. All his old friends of Oriel and Christ Church came in shoals to visit their whilom companion and his bride. There was at that time a pack of harriers in the kennels, and four English miles of shooting, over and above the attraction of a lady who knew everybody about town. So the game progressed right merrily, and had it continued, though she brought her husband some fortune, the chances are that the Ipsden estate would have again required nursing. A change, however, came over the spirit of their dream.

There had been at Oriel with young Squire John a scholar of the name of Fry. This gentleman's brains and heart were vastly

superior to his manner and appearance. In college he had been anathema to a set numbering among others the late Lords Devon and Charles Spenser, Brummel, Stackhouse, and Pendarves; as a matter of fact, the Squire dubbed him "a vulgar fellow," whose grey stockings were a cause of offence, and whose clay pipe one of absolute abomination. It chanced, however, that the Vicar of Ipsden, a divine much given to partridge-shooting, who conducted a funeral in sporting garb plus of course the necessary surplice, fell sick, and Mr. Fry came as his Locum Tenens. "You must ask the gentleman to dinner," said Mrs. Reade. "I really can't," pleaded the Squire. However, though the good man was not invited to the festive board, both John Reade and his young wife paid him the compliment of occupying the family pew on Sunday, and they who came to scoff remained to pray.

The plain, vulgar, ungainly scholar, in a word, had developed into a mighty preacher. He had caught the fervour of the original Methodists, and his rhetoric, if delivered with a provincial accent, was of the type that strikes hard and strikes home. After church the

Squire turned to his wife and said, "I wish I had asked Fry to dinner. I'll ask him now." And so he did, with a courteous apology for his previous *laches*, and the scholar with the grey stockings pocketed the affront, walked back with them to the house,—nearly a mile,—and metamorphosed both. The Squire dropped his Oriel friends,* family prayers

* One of his old Oxford set never relaxed his intimacy with the Squire. This was Henry Peckwell, student of Christ Church, who afterwards assumed the name of Blosset, and as Sir Henry Blosset was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, and uncle of George Grote, the historian. This gentleman rode over to Ipsden to learn that Squire John had an heir, and returning to his college rooms, indited the following stanzas:

"Through Dorchester, as journeying late,
I passed the churchyard's ancient gate,
And mused in pensive mood,
Immortal sounds I seemed to meet;
Trembling I stopp'd, when at my feet
A meagre phantom stood.

'Three hundred years,' it cried, 'and more,
My body near yon aged tower
Has slept in sacred peace.
I dwell in Heaven, in glory there
I watch, and with a father's care
Protect my manly race.

became an institution at Ipsden, everything mundane was sent to the right-about, bar the harriers,—to have dispersed the pack would have been too severe a sacrifice for Mr. John Reade,—and Mr. Fry was constituted father confessor. He brought over from Lincoln College his bosom friend, George Stanley Faber, a Yorkshireman with an incomprehensible dialect, but a magnificent brain, which latter divine married Mrs. Reade's sister, and for nearly sixty years subsequently kept up a continuous correspondence with Ipsden, mostly on the subject of prophecy, for he was the Cumming of the period, and certainly justified his reputation by foretelling the Second

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As each new heir his breath receives,
Those peaceful realms my spirit leaves,
His future state to learn.
To Ipsden journeying now, for there
My first delight, my tenderest care,
A lovely babe is born."

Sir Henry, of course, refers to Sir Edmund Rede, the rebuilder of Dorchester Abbey, whose remains rest under its shadow. But the doctrine of the good Chief Justice, even for 1797, when nobody was suspected of Romanism, must have staggered the theological mother of the said lovely babe. According to Sir Henry, the successive heirs to Ipsden and Shipton were placed under the patronage of saintly Sir Edmund! This indeed was rank papistry.

Empire, almost before the First had attained its zenith. As a matter of fact, of the two divines who influenced so largely both the Squire of Ipsden and his wife, Faber was by far the more intellectual and presentable. Both of them were Doric, but the one was cultured; whereas the other, known afterwards as Fry of Bath, though a splendid preacher and fine Hebrew scholar, never attained to the semblance of a gentleman. In his old age a long pipe and spittoon were his inseparable companions, but withal he was a good man and a good Christian.

The conversion of Mrs. Reade to the tenets of high Calvinism affected the entire atmosphere of Ipsden for more than half a century. If the Vicar was a Gallio, the village became one of the most religious in the county.* No

* Influenced by Mr. Fry's teaching, the Squire, to whom all the cottages in the village of Ipsden belonged, invited his humble tenants to come up to the House on Sundays when there was no service in the church and read with him; or, if *they* could not read, hear him read, and explain one or two chapters in the Bible for their mutual edification. Mr. Wright, the then Incumbent of Ipsden, gave only one service on Sunday, and sometimes that one was pretermitted. His sermon, accurately timed to ten minutes, was (unlike his example) moral, but often incomprehensible to his humble hearers, and there his active clerical life ceased: comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick and dying,

public-house offered a counter-attraction to the Bible, and the boys and girls who with rapid succession put in an appearance at Ipsden

appeared to form no part, in his opinion, of a clergyman's duty. Mrs. Reade might fulfil it if she thought fit—he offered no objection; but when it came to a layman reading the Bible to other laymen his wrath kindled, and he incontinently addressed a vehement letter to the Bishop of Oxford, urging his lordship at once to proceed against the Squire for holding a Conventicle in his house contrary to law. The bishop wrote a kind letter to Mr. Reade, reminding him, as an active magistrate, that the law prohibited the assembling together under a roof of more than twenty persons, either for religious or political objects. The Squire replied, explaining what the real facts were, and that the number of the cottagers who met together had never exceeded twelve. The bishop's reply was, nevertheless, looked for with some anxiety. After a few days it came, the family being seated at breakfast at the time. Mr. Reade read the letter in silence, and with a grave face. Mrs. Reade, who was on tenter-hooks, at last could contain herself no longer. "My dear John," she exclaimed, "what does the bishop say?" "Well, my dear," her husband quietly replied, "in substance, that Reade is right and Wright is wrong." In fact, the bishop warmly approved the course Mr. Reade had pursued, and urged him to continue it. Thus fortified, a Sunday School, nearly, if not quite, the first in Oxfordshire, was established and supported by the Squire at his sole expense. Later on he built a school-house for day as well as Sunday scholars, the mistress who presided being styled the Dame; and in that school Mrs. Reade, her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have taught successive generations of the Ipsden poor for upwards of eighty years.

House between the years 1797 and 1814 acquired a belief which never deserted them. It is but just to add, that no mother ever laboured with more unremitting exertion to make her children capable. She would have had every one distinguished, for the mediocrity which satisfied her really clever but totally unambitious husband, to her was most abhorrent. Not once nor twice was John Reade urged by her to enter on a Parliamentary career for which he was personally fitted, being gifted with a noble presence and a fluent tongue, while his interest in an age when interest carried everything was overpowering. The dogs and the woods satisfied the born country gentleman, and his wife, therefore, centred all her hopes in her sons. Earnestly, almost oppressively, she sought to fire them with her vaulting ambition to be first among the first. The names of John Thurlow Reade and of Edward Anderdon Reade live still in the memory of the dark-skinned inhabitants of the north-west provinces of India; but of all her sons the name of Charles Reade alone has gained a world-wide renown.

The routine of Ipsden House resembled clock-work. Prayers at 8 a.m. in the drawing-

room, when the servants introduced a deal form for themselves, the housekeeper and butler, as became those in authority, being permitted the luxury of a chair. The Squire was his own chaplain, and one rule he enforced rigorously and dogmatically, viz. that on no account, and at no hour of the day, should any book, sacred or secular, be laid on the top of the Bible. The method of elocution adopted at these diurnal domestic functions would be styled now-a-days histrionic, if not melodramatic. Enough that it was sincere.

Prayers over, all promptly adjourned to the breakfast-room, where breakfast followed in due course. The Ipsden hot-rolls were subsequently introduced at Cuddesden Palace, Bishop Wilberforce, from his earlier recollections of Ipsden, having begged for the receipt. One can but wish that these simple luxuries of the past had not shared the fate of the species dodo, for they are now but memories. Luncheon was punctually at one, dinner at half-past five, tea about eight; then chess and music till ten, when family vespers ended the day. Of course everybody was dressed for dinner—the ladies with bare necks and arms, the gentlemen

in blue coats with brass buttons. This arrangement was *de rigueur* even when the house was comparatively empty, a social condition of infrequent occurrence, guests, as a rule, succeeding each other by relays. Everybody ate much and drank little, the wines being Madeira and port, except the late Sir John Chandos Reade, who, as head of the family, was privileged to invert the process. Beer was an almost unknown beverage, the entire family preferring wine, with the solitary exception of Charles, who was a stern water-drinker until quite late in life.

Environed by this Arcadian, indeed primeval, simplicity, Mrs. Reade lived and did her work in the world industriously and happily. She was at once domestic and social, with an aptitude for cultivating the great of the earth, more particularly when they were of her own cult. Lord Thurlow was godfather to her eldest son; Barrington, the Prince-Bishop of Durham, who resided at Mongewell Park, three miles off, became sponsor for her fourth; and Warren Hastings for her youngest daughter. "My dearest Lady Effingham" was the friend of her life-time, until that lady in her eighth

decade ran away with a Scripture-reader, when the note changed, and she was styled "That horrid old woman." On her, however, and others of the same type, she wasted reams of paper and gallons of ink, the major part of the forenoon being devoted to correspondence. It is perhaps superfluous to hint, that a lady gifted with such exceptional mental qualities, though a devoted mother, was by no means ambitious of being bored by her children—indeed, she sent the sons off to school as early as possible, and after that to India. Her influence with the Board of Directors of the Old East India Company was virtually paramount. She obtained no less than three writerships, *i. e.* appointments in the Civil Service, together with two cavalry cadetships, for her sons, and an infantry cadetship for a connection by marriage. Five out of seven boys were thus expeditiously launched to sink or swim; and as regards the daughters, the two elder were wedded to men of her choice, while one remained single, to be the companion of her fourteen years of widowhood.

Although, therefore, this woman of idiosyncrasies consigned her five elder sons to

the India where she was born, and where her father had attained a certain eminence, her youngest seemed from his cradle to have a singular attraction for her. Charles was her pet. When her other children came from school or college, she loved them for a day, tolerated them for a week, and then devoutly wished they were out of the house. Charles, however, was ever welcome, missed when absent, and adored when present. For his mother was as warm-hearted as capricious, and it may be that her quick perception detected in him evidences of consummate brain-power, the quality she coveted for all. Yet she had not one stupid child—indeed, her whole family was distinctly talented. Her two elder sons shone at Rugby and Haileybury, her third at Charterhouse. Her fourth, the father of Winwood, the African explorer, was a brilliant *raconteur;* her fifth became acting Lieutenant-Governor of the north-west provinces, during the mutiny, and not only saved Agra, but, better still, Havelock from collapse, by supplying him at a critical moment with funds. It was the fortune of her sixth to be engaged in several leading cases with no small *éclat,*

and Charles was himself the last but not least; while of her daughters, Julia, the wife of the martyr, Captain Allen Gardiner, R.N., has left a memory alike sweet and fragrant. She was as handsome as her father, and as brilliant as her mother. Nearly forty years after this lady's decease a nephew of hers was greeted by an ardent Romanist with, "What, are you a nephew of Julia Reade?" as though the fact alone spoke volumes; the speaker adding, "For grace, for beauty, and for brains, I have never known any woman to be her equal." Nor was that the language of exaggeration. It was not, therefore, because her other children were dullards or behemoths that Mrs. Reade concentrated her maternal affection on Charles. There was a bond of brain between mother and son, and withal a decided similarity of disposition. He entertained from first to last a firm belief in the majesty of his mother's mental powers, and loved her, we may be sure, none the less for being in every fibre a lady. It was to her that he was indebted for those habits of untiring industry which, even when he appeared to be a man of leisure, redeemed his hours of seeming idleness from inanity, and

afterwards converted his luxurious residence at Albert Gate into a workshop. His mother's brain was never passive. The secret of her social success lay in the fact of her having so much to say on every conceivable topic. She had read, she had thought, she had discussed the problems of the day, its literature, its theology and politics, within and without the family circle, and her mind rapidly crystallized ideas. Bishops and learned doctors listened to her with genuine admiration, for to the charm of originality she added that of research. She was a firm believer in woman's wit; her earnestness was so intense that she could hardly tolerate badinage, or fun of any sort. At dinner she would seem almost surprised at the effect produced by her husband's sparkling sallies, and was once heard to whisper an irate aside, that he was getting to be a very frivolous old man. To her everything was so overwhelmingly serious, that although a smile never left her features—except on very rare occasions—she had no time for laughter, still less for fooling. There was nothing little about her, and to her littleness was tantamount to vulgarity. To say

that she impressed all with whom she came in contact is to render her but scant justice, for she attracted most especially the highest minds, such as George Grote, Samuel Wilberforce, G. S. Faber, and his splendid nephew, founder of the Brompton Oratory and poet. That, however, was not all; her servants held her in the highest estimation. To the poor people on the Ipsden estate she played the part of lady bountiful, feeding them royally, and physicking their vitals experimentally. This spirit of charity she certainly transmitted to her son Charles, together, unluckily, with her faculty for being very easily humbugged. That her sons were keenly appreciative of the worth of this mother of theirs may be inferred from the simple fact of one among their number having jotted down, during a period of forty years, several hundred of her wisest aphorisms. It would obviously be impossible to give more than a sample of her epigrammatic tongue and pen. Suffice it that the following were unpremeditated, uttered in the course of common conversation, or scribbled *currente calamo*, but rescued from oblivion by the affection of a

son who treasured his mother's wit as sacred. She shall speak for herself in the excerpts culled from a small MS. volume in her son's handwriting, almost at random.

"Life teems with contrarieties, and the wise man seeks rather to discipline his mind than to alter his circumstances."

"Mr. Hastings is surprisingly well and young. At eighty skipping like a fawn, and not old-looking. But at eighty I prefer age."

"How difficult it is for a mother to win the love of her sons when she has to fight against their inclinations! But in this, as in other cases, the line of duty is the line for me to take."

"Oh, for bark and steel for the mind, instead of sentiment and spermaceti!"

"I left my Charles in his solitude of College with an aching heart. It is my children that glue me to life."

"I do not much fancy Daniel Wilson as Bishop (of Calcutta). He is a child of God, but barely a gentleman in manners."

"I am better for advice, but in our grand climacteric we must expect the pins to loosen."

"There are some persons whose detestation of you is desirable. Their praise would be censure."

"Female authors are springing up like mushrooms. I begin to think tapestry was a wise employment."

"My friend Samuel Wilberforce will be a bishop. He eschews the doctrine and disloyalty of Newman, but seems inclined to shut up the Kingdom of Heaven from all but Episcopalians."

"Love makes sad havoc with some people, but will not hurt those who can change easily from fair to brown."

"The wisest man is he who never anticipates, but is daily thankful for the good he enjoys."

"A bouncing girl with the mind of a sparrow, and a beauty with all her wit in her heels, is heaviness to me."

"My early education, early tastes, early friends make me utterly at issue with all vulgarity and imitative gentility."

"Commonplace people are always on the subject of servants or dress, or newspaper information. I had rather be closeted for

aye with my own thoughts than have freedom with theirs."

"I have been reading Macaulay's Essays. That on Milton so much admired is execrable in principle, and not redeemed by antithetical eloquence. I like the sparkling, easy style of Horace Walpole, and his terse criticisms better than this new-fangled style of our reviews."

"I have read a few works of fiction. The low wit of Dickens I abominate, but except Nicholas Nickleby. Bulwer I do not read, but James, with his love-ladies, is interesting. And love is not dead, nor imagination either, in your old mother." She was seventy-one.

"One does not wish to see sentiment oozing out at every pore; but there is a bright look and a beaming eye that sets all life within afloat, and *that* pleases. Profession of all sorts is an emetic—but ice chills."

"As to the apostolic succession, drive the nail too hard, and you will rather destroy than build up the Church of England."

"Nothing annoys me so much as the loss of the English language in the literature of the day. There is Carlyle with his abominable German phraseology—conceited divines, with

their Frenchified sentences and compound words that make me throw the book down. What think you of Montgomery ending an octavo volume with 'How'? I like pithy and epigrammatic sentences, a little antithesis also, but only a little."

"To be ever on the stilts is a mistake in these days, when the head is often compelled to take the place of the tail."

"Catechisms make a parrot."

"Haydn gave me his picture on my marriage. On the reverse was Solon's maxim, 'Reckon not on Happiness.'"

"Lady Bathurst said of my father in the time of the Hastings controversy, 'Here comes Scott, his eyes full of fire and his pockets full of pamphlets.'" This was *à propos* of her father's daughter, evidently.

To these may be added a sentiment of the canonical variety which reflects the mind of the high Tory, high Calvinist, and high-bred lady. "No one should go beyond his own grounds on Sunday, except to church." Unluckily we have not all of us grounds to go beyond.

This clever lady, as will be noted, was in

essence a proverbial philosopher, often unconsciously funny, but always burningly earnest. Paragraphs of hers read like extracts from Charles Reade's earlier novels, *e.g.* "Living in London," she writes, "what is it? Cliques fashionable, cliques political, cliques religious, and clubs the exceptions." Mixed, however, with so much that was pragmatical and didactic, with much of Jane Austen's ideas about sense, sentiment, and sensibility, and with the consequent glorification of the commonplace, was a current of tenderness, rarely rising to the surface, perhaps too often obscured. It existed, however, and when in evidence charmed by its simplicity. Thus, after the death of her squire she wrote, "My children are too old to be loving; I miss the pressure of my dear husband's hand." And during the last week of her life, at the age of ninety, she wrote to her son Edward a farewell, concluding with the really poetic paradox, "THE MOTHER NEVER DIES!"

That is indeed a beautiful truth!

CHAPTER II.

BABYHOOD.

CHARLES READE was born at Ipsden House on the 8th of June, 1814. The youngest of eleven, he entered a home well filled with boys and girls, of whom the elder were almost young men and women. India, however, so soon absorbed the three seniors that he was barely able to recall them, and at a family gathering in his later years openly avowed himself unable to contra-distinguish the portrait of his brother George from that of his brother Henry. His eldest sister, moreover, was shortly after married to an ex-fellow of St. John's, and her union with Mr., afterwards Canon, Woodrooffe virtually took her out of the family. The little Charley, therefore, became from his cradle the especial charge of his sister Julia. Seldom has it fallen to the lot of a child to be blessed

with such a nurse, and in after years he never mentioned her name except with some prefix of endearment. His brothers joined in the general idolatry of the fair-haired, rosy-cheeked urchin with the large thoughtful eyes, and a mouth that already showed signs of caprice and wilfulness. Had there been less of wisdom and sound sense blended with such pronounced favouritism, the boy would have developed even in the nursery into an *enfant terrible;* but sister Julia was too high-minded to spoil him for the sake of selfish gratification, and his mother had a habit of loving her children with an iron love. She was honey one moment and vinegar the next; now indulgent up to a certain limit, and now, as she phrased it, tiring and teasing the children. Charles doubtless came in for his full share of her caressing and his half share of her tantalizing, but the latter could not have affected him much. If he was naughty some one else got the blame; if he gave vent to those momentary ebullitions of temper, which afterwards induced him to style the most eminent of dramatic critics "A criticaster and a shrimp," his amiable sister was sure to be at hand to exorcise the evil spirit by the sheer

force of sweetness; if the young Turk essayed to bully his seniors and got compound interest in return, Julia was ready to ward off the nemesis his self-assertion had evoked, and pour oil on the troubled waters. He was a spoilt child if ever there was one, and would have been made totally indisciplined but for a fortunate accident.

The nurseries in Ipsden House were situate on the first floor of the old wing, that portion of the mansion whose date is uncertain, but is believed to ante-date 1536. Three rooms and a passage were shut off from the rest of the house by a swing door, and it may be supposed that, having been devoted to the use of young children from 1797, when John Thurlow the eldest son was born, to 1818, a stretch of twenty-one years, they had got out of repair. Hence, when Charles was but four years of age, it occurred to the Squire to furbish up this wing, but the process of papering, painting, and white-washing would necessarily take time. Not only so, but the rest of Ipsden House needed renovation, and therefore a temporary exodus for the whole family seemed inevitable. They managed things differently in those days,

In this year of grace, if a country gentleman had a mind to repair his house, he would either rent another in the shires or in town, or perhaps at Brighton. In 1818 locomotion was laborious, and the sort of undertaking to be dreaded; so it was determined for the nonce to disperse the family, and as a preliminary son Charles, though very young indeed for so grave an experiment, was breeched, and thus technically, according to the ideas of the period, converted into a schoolboy. No doubt the poor little fellow parted with his frocks painfully, and resented the honour thus thrust upon him, but he must ere this have learnt that, however much mother and sister might pet him, the rule of Ipsden was rather stoic than epicurean. The Squire with his hounds and his gun was no milksop. Mrs. Reade indulged her own tastes and caprices *ad libitum*, but stringently insisted upon every one else practising the virtue of self-denial. Ipsden is probably the coldest house in Europe, yet fires were all but unknown luxuries in its bed-rooms; the halls and principal staircase were icy, and even in the living rooms the beechen logs with their cheer-

ful blaze emitted a minimum of heat. Ladies with bare necks and arms shivered in the dining-room and clustered round the hearth-rug in the drawing-room. There was, in fact, with a superb *cuisine* of the genuine and unostentatious kind, with abundance of civilization and punctilio, a singular absence of real comfort, and Master Charles, like his sisters and brothers, learnt from his cradle to rough it. The breeches, however, at the tender age of four were a severer discipline than had been meted out to his brethren. Their symbolism was not remote. These integuments said that, being now by virtue of his breeching a boy, he must put off childish things. They warned him solemnly that the time had come to buckle to, and learn his regular lessons at stated hours, in lieu of that easy, desultory instruction which hitherto had passed muster. But above all, he soon discovered, to his bitter grief, that these detestable breeks were destined to separate him from his dear mother, his yet dearer sister Julia, and all the glorious liberty of the nursery, for the stern decree had gone forth that he, the tiny brat of four years, should accompany his bigger brother to school.

The truth is, that his mother, much as she loved the baby Charles, loved her own whims and fancies more, and had resolved to spend the interregnum during the furbishment of Ipsden House in the gay but serious city of Bath. Mr. Fry, her evangelist, had pitched his tent there. They could drive into Somersetshire from Ipsden with their own horses by breaking the journey at Faringdon or Cirencester, and thus escape the horror of coaching. Bath was at its zenith, and it is just possible that, after twenty-two years of Ipsden, this good lady may have begun to hanker after the fleshpots of fashion, whereof she had partaken so extensively in her maiden days. Bath, therefore, was the *venue*, and Mrs. Reade had no notion of Bath in combination with a legion of brats. To her mind the glories of King Bladud's city were incompatible with the responsibilities of maternity, so she eliminated those irksome adjuncts *pro tem.*, and packed off her nursery-full to school, while the rest were despatched on a round of visits to relations and friends,—and thus Mrs. Reade and her husband were enabled to descend in state upon Bath without encumbrances.

The school selected for sons Charley and Compton had been started by a Mrs. Bradley at Reading. This lady must have been gifted with considerable force of character, for her ambition seems to have been both to fulfil her duties as wife and mother, and also to keep the domestic pot aboil by her own exertions. Her husband, who is described as a dapper little fellow dressed *à la militaire*, acted the part of drill-serjeant to the pupils, but was content to allow his wife to earn his and her bread. This, by the bye, was no such easy feat. Mrs. Bradley happened to be nursing her first-born, and that interesting occupation must have interfered not a little with her work as an informer of the youthful mind. Infants, even when of the highest moral calibre, are apt to give tongue in season and out of season, and that which Mrs. Bradley had introduced to this terrestrial scene was no less fractious than the rest. It afforded, in short, a substantial guarantee against that over-pressure which is said to be the vice of Board Schools. The Bradley establishment must have been more of a *crêche* than a school.

The big landau with the seventeen-hand

bays—the Squire plumed himself on his horse-flesh—took the two boys over to Reading by noon one fine day, and after a formal welcome from Mrs. Bradley, and a view-halloo from the suckling cherub, at one o'clock the boys sat down to dinner. The two Reades were hungry enough after their ten mile drive, and awaited with no common interest the entrance of the viands. Grace was said, and then a huge rice pudding entered an appearance. Now rice pudding at best is rather homely fare, and it came in the shape of an unwelcome surprise. Compton accepted his helping as a matter of duty, but a glance at his brother Charley's visage warned him of an impending storm. The little fellow looked quite all the indignation he felt, and when a plateful was placed in front of him, clutched his spoon, filled it with the stodgy stuff, lifted it to his mouth, and then dropped it with a crash.

Mrs. Bradley, who had been dispensing this edible, glanced inquiringly across at her new pupil to behold him push away plate, spoon, and all in a torrent of temper, while in a tone of absolute ill-usage he ejaculated, "Where's my meat?"

This query of course demanded explanations which were duly forthcoming, and the future author learnt that whereas in the county of Oxford and parish of Ipsden the custom prevailed of eating meat first and pudding second, in the county of Berks and borough of Reading they inverted the process. On being further assured that those pupils only who ate their pudding were permitted the luxury of fibrine, Master Charles took the hint promptly, and by sedulous devotion to rice-pudding earned a full commons of meat. This singular *bouleversement* of the items of the ordinary *menu* was not peculiar to Mrs. Bradley's establishment, nor to that of Mr. Squeers. It obtained in very many schools, the idea being to save the butcher's bill, and keep the boys in health. Dickens by a stroke of the pen abrogated it, but before 'Nicholas Nickleby' set the world laughing, parents had got to regard the arrangement as of the nature of a swindle, and there was subsequently much indignation at Ipsden against Madame Bradley's petty economy when the story of little Charley's first dinner at school was narrated.

The rehabilitation of Ipsden House took

exactly three months to complete, and at the expiration of that period Charles with his elder brother returned home. They found the nursery converted into a school-room, and that their *régime* in the future would be that of school-boys, not of children. Shortly after this Compton was sent to join his brother Edward at a private tutor's near Oxford, and Charles again became the sole charge of his sister Julia. She washed him, dressed him, taught and played with him, nor would she permit any one to usurp her place. Never was there so devoted a sister, never a boy more attached to a beautiful, *spirituelle*, and accomplished woman. Clever and brilliant herself, she made learning not only easy to him, but pleasant. He must have been largely influenced by her grace and *esprit*. It was indeed a rare privilege to have been trained even in early youth by one who, in virtue of extraordinary qualities, was enabled to command universal admiration, being herself, notwithstanding, entirely unconscious of it. Bright, animated, vivacious, yet never lacking dignity, she taught him to appreciate not merely wisdom, but wit, and to abhor mediocrity. The debt he owed to her was incal-

culable; indeed, her social influence throughout a brief but beautiful life was as fertilizing of good as the sunshine. During the three years when he was her pupil, Charles developed surprisingly every quality of the heart and brain. At six he could play a fine game of chess, and at seven had acquired the rudiments of a sound English education, plus that love of literature which he retained throughout his life, and which in a degree proved the basis of his success. It was the kind and good Julia who made him a devourer of books, and it had been well for him had she continued her work of tuition and supervision for the entire period of his boyhood. A sister's affection, however ardent and impulsive though it may be, is a transferable quality—as the little Charles, to his sorrow, was destined to discover.

About five miles from Ipsden, subtending the river's banks, and environed by park-like grounds, stands Combe Lodge, the seat then of the Gardiners. The founder of that family was a merchant or broker, who came down to Oxfordshire at the latter end of the last century, and purchased extensive estates in the parishes of Whitchurch and Goring. The younger

son of Mr. Gardiner of Combe in 1821 was a certain Allen Francis Gardiner, a naval officer of strong religious sentiments. There was, by the bye, a religious vein in the Gardiner family, for some of Captain Gardiner's nearest relatives afterwards became disciples of the great Irving. A-wooing journeyed to Ipsden the gallant captain, and his suit prospered. He was evangelical, so was Julia Reade. His brain was filled with romantic visions of apostleship, so was hers. He had been a very pretty boy, and as a midshipman had played girls' parts in theatricals at Portsmouth with some *éclat*, and it is possible his future wife was able to trace the vestiges of his youthful good looks. But his features, which singularly resembled those of Lord Nelson, were bronzed, and his manner cold and stern, though doubtless not to her. From a worldly point of view the match was hardly a good one, for Captain Gardiner was a younger son, and Julia had a plethora of suitors. It was, however, essentially a love-match, and both the Squire and his wife were well pleased that their daughter had chosen a man of such natural nobility of character.

The wedding came off at Ipsden Church. Captain Gardiner's sister had just bestowed her hand on Mr. Hunt of Buckhurst, a more than opulent squarson, among the issue of that marriage being George Ward Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Postmaster-General under Lords Derby and Beaconsfield. There were Gardiners and Hunts in abundance at the wedding, and indeed all the country-side. Sixty carriages followed the bride and bridegroom to church; and bearing in mind that there were no railways, this fact speaks volumes for the esteem in which the happy couple were held. Every one in that region knew what a fine fellow Allen Gardiner was, most had heard of the grace and beauty of Julia Reade. So they all mustered in force to do them honour and wish them joy, little dreaming, by the bye, that so glorious a morning would presage a brief day for the one and a tragic termination for the other.

Before going to church the guests assembled at Ipsden House, and one can well imagine the picture of the tall, handsome squire, perhaps more regretful than overjoyed, with his blue

coat and buff waistcoat, as he nervously took out his watch, said time was up, and demanded *sotto voce*, "Why the bride had not entered an appearance?" Sister Ellinor was despatched from the drawing-room to hurry down Miss Julia, but she returned with a puzzled face to say that the bride was not in her chamber, and could not be found. A curious smile of awkwardness passed round, and the company began to think of the old oak chest of the mistletoe bough. Other messengers were sent in search, but still with the same result, till the Squire began to fume, and his wife herself ascended hastily the broad oak stairs, and in high dudgeon roamed from room to room. At last the musical note of her daughter Julia's voice caught her ear, and gave her the cue. With all speed she tripped down the passage leading to the night nursery, to behold the bride, orange-blossoms and all, hard at work dressing the youngest of her brothers.

"What, mamma," cried she reproachfully, "do you think I would go to church without my little Charley?"

They had determined that this infinitesimal element should be omitted from the ceremony,

but Julia would not have it so. Her pupil should have the last of her life and love till the moment when she pledged both to her noble husband.

And so Charles went with the rest of the big company, and no doubt with his large, pensive eyes took in the whole scene. It was fraught, poor boy, with ill-omen for his happiness, for so long as Julia was at home to play mother to him, Ipsden House was able to tolerate his presence. It chanced, however, that soon after she disappeared, leaving a gap the Squire always declared could never be filled, his cousin, Emma Scott-Waring, a little tom-boy of a girl, came on a visit, and the pair took upon themselves not merely to rob the hen-roost, but further to pelt each other with the new-laid eggs. The girl, after detection, was severely punished for the sin of having enticed Master Charles from the path of rectitude, whereas in truth it was altogether the other way. His mother would not hear of her dear and spoilt boy being subjected to corporal chastisement, so the Squire, in order to ensure its abundant application, packed him off sharp to join his elder brother Compton at Rose Hill, Iffley,

near Oxford. The Dominie who was their schoolmaster had already beaten his three elder brothers metaphorically into jellies, and the same horrible fate was reserved for Master Charles.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER THE ROD.

It was popularly supposed at the beginning of the century that knowledge was introduced to the human brain by dint of hard knocks on every part of the person. A boy, from that point of view, could scarcely be too severely cudgelled or too constantly flogged. Men said that the cat-o'-nine-tails won for us both Trafalgar and Waterloo, and that to make a boy a scholar and a gentleman copious flagellation was essential. Dr. Valpy earned the *sobriquet* of "Vapuly," by the horrible tortures he inflicted on his pupils, yet was generally considered, before Arnold, the model Head Master. But Valpy himself was mild and merciful in contrast with the pedagogue to whom the Squire of Ipsden entrusted his four younger boys.

The Squire perhaps may have been less blameworthy than his wife. A Rugbeian himself, John Reade not unnaturally sent his two elder sons to Rugby, while the third became a Carthusian. Yet somehow neither Rugby nor the Charterhouse quite satisfied Mr. Reade, who began to question whether a public school education might not be more costly than advantageous. He therefore favoured the notion of private tuition for his younger sons, but the actual selection of a private tutor he appears to have left to his wife. Now Mrs. Reade, like many clever women, had strong prejudices. Her belief in the clergy of her own way of thinking was simply amazing, and she almost invested them with the attribute of infallibility. History has failed to record who recommended the Rev. Mr. Slatter of Rose Hill, Iffley, as tutor of her boys. The cleric, whoever he was, who advised a mother to confide in so inhuman a master must have been gifted with a curious conscience. Charles Dickens' Squeers has always been accepted as a broad caricature, but this same character in some respects, though not in all, was highly coloured in the person of Mr. Slatter. Life

under his roof was more than purgatory—it was a positive inferno. His system has accurately been described as one of all punishment and no reward, and the wonder was that he preserved till his death a steady average of subjects to experiment upon. Nothing but the generally diffused superstition concerning the necessity of never sparing the rod could have kept him going, for severity increased with his advancing years; and though at thirty-five he was only a harsh martinet, at sixty-five he seemed to take pleasure in the physical sufferings of his pupils.

When her husband opened his school, Mrs. Slatter, who was a gentle, motherly sort of woman, often pleaded for the unfortunate youngsters who had fallen into disgrace. But as years passed on she became inured to the wails of the sufferers, or perchance discovered that her interference was of no avail. Once in every half-year each pupil was invited to spend Sunday evening with this good woman in her sanctum. On these occasions apple-tart was the style of provender; but before deglutition the guest was required to repeat the names of the Oxford Colleges. It was a singular species

of entertainment, but keenly appreciated by the boys, as affording a sort of contrast to the horrors of the school-room. The school, in short, was repressive and crushing. Its master had acquired a certain reputation as a strict disciplinarian, but in truth his system of terrorizing stupefied his pupils. Executions went on perpetually throughout school hours, and it was a rare occurrence for any boy to escape corporal punishment on a larger or lesser scale between breakfast and dinner, or dinner and tea. On a high platform, covered with red baize, in the angle of the room, posed Mr. Slatter. The boys on forms sat round the green baize-covered table, a stool at the angle of the table nearest the door serving as the vehicle for one species of execution, and a very painful one indeed. Each pupil was summoned in turn, his lesson assigned him to learn by heart, and in due time he was called up to repeat it. Probably he got through the first three lines correctly, then followed some slight lapse of memory. "Hold out your hand!" was the prompt command, and down came the cane irrespective of chilblains and bruises. A small child of course would yell,

whereupon the punishment was repeated for the fresh offence of crying. In the course of a single lesson a dozen cuts would be showered on the hands or arms; while if the boy had omitted to learn even the first few lines, the stool above referred to was requisitioned, the child was flung across it, his back bared, and blows rained upon him. After this infliction a sitting posture was excruciating torture, for the skin was abraded and the flesh severely bruised.

This, however, was not supposed to be the *ne plus ultra* of the inquisitor's art. In the event of any grave offence being committed the offender was invited to "come into my study, sir," a small room across the hall, and then all ears were attention to count the number of strokes inflicted on the bare flesh by the birch rod. The shrieks of the sufferer after each stroke were duly timed, but not seldom obscured by wild and frantic cries for mercy—an appeal utterly fruitless.

Of course the boys learnt nothing, or next door to nothing. The Latin grammar was written in Latin, and committed to memory without reference to any meaning the words

might have. Mr. Slatter never explained, or *taught.* He sat on his throne to hear lessons *said.* If the task was repeated accurately, the pupil escaped the cane. That was his negative reward. If he repeated ninety-nine words only out of a hundred he got caned for the odd one. And this was what Mr. Slatter facetiously termed "grounding" in Latin!

It was a somewhat singular fact that the smaller boys at Rose Hill suffered the most. When a sturdy youth kicked Mr. Slatter's shins, though vendetta followed promptly, he safe-guarded his corpus against future vivisection. That same sturdy boy is now an Admiral in Her Majesty's fleet, and if he peruses these lines may recall to memory how pluckily he stuck to the wall, kicked with all his might, and was only dragged to the stool of torture after a stiff resistance, wherein he did not altogether come off worst. But at the time he was not a junior, and in fact had passed through a long ordeal of suffering as a small boy before he mustered up courage to resist. It would have been well had his example been followed by all. The writer after a lapse of forty-five years sees as clearly

as though it were to-day, a little child of six, a widow's son and pet, who had been most tenderly nurtured, and was sent from Oxford to Iffley for afternoon lessons only. He sees this child caned till his hysterical crying could not cease, and his whole body was swollen with the blows. In after years he heard that same child as a man, and a dying man, curse the name of Slatter, though that merciless torturer who had rendered his childhood a hell lay under the sod of Iffley churchyard.

It is possible that the Squire might have hesitated before consigning his son Charles to this harsh disciplinarian but for an unlucky circumstance. His three elder sons needed no severe curb. But the fourth son, William Barrington, was endowed by nature with a turbulent spirit. Though in stature the little one of the family, his high spirit was only equalled by an inordinate love of mischief, and his cuticle was so tough, his muscles so hard, that it needed something akin to a surgical operation to make him feel at all. This rough-and-tumble youth appears somewhat to have startled Mr. Slatter, who had been accustomed to operate on sensitive subjects, and was puzzled

proportionately by a phenomenal insensibility to pain. On arriving at Rose Hill Master William Barrington dined with the rest in total silence—the rule of the school. He ate his meat without observation; but when the spotted dog made its appearance, the new boy exclaimed incontinently, "I say, Mr. Slatter, the plums in this pudding are calling out to each other, 'Here be I, Jack; where be you?'" The school tittered in the subdued fashion of convicts with the lash always impending, whereupon Mr. Slatter summoned Master William Barrington to "stand out;" and laying down his fork and spoon, clutched the cane, and began to play upon the new boy vigorously. To his chagrin, however, the blows made no impression, indeed the victim did not wince, but smiled as at a supreme jest. At last, however, he observed, in a tone of mild reproach, suggestive of the possibility of overdoing even the best of jokes, "I say, if you keep on at that much longer you'll *hurt* me!" Needless to add, that however severely he might be thrashed, this same Master William Barrington was much too proud to carry home a grumble; indeed in his case it would have

been fruitless, for the Squire would have replied that in beating so fractious a boy the master was only doing his duty.

With William Barrington there went to Mr. Slatter's Edward Anderdon, the fifth son, whose powers of application were abnormal, and who escaped the cane simply because he always mastered his lessons. Later on Compton, the sixth son, joined his brothers, and on him descended the full force of the pedagogue's right arm. Pride, however, kept his tongue silent. His elder brothers had not complained, and had he protested against the severity to which he was subjected, he would have been gibbeted in the family circle as an idler. He omitted, therefore, to warn his mother against Mr. Slatter, and the little Charles, not yet eight years of age, became one of his victims.

Compton had been his younger brother's companion at Mrs. Bradley's, and was ready to fight his battle at Rose Hill. But what can a small boy of ten do in opposition to a master, and that master a bully? It was the practice of this most peculiar of pedagogues to make the acquaintance of a new pupil within a few hours of his entry into the school by vigorous

chastisement. There was no hypocrisy about Mr. Slatter. He did not pretend to be his pupils' friend, and whale their bodies for the good of their souls. Nothing of the kind. He made it clear as crystal that you had come there to be thrashed, possibly for your own good, certainly for his gratification. He therefore welcomed Charles Reade as a new subject, and a very promising one, inasmuch as, unlike his pachydermatous brother, William Barrington, he evinced an acute sense of pain. Day after day the child's flesh was lacerated by the cruel cane, until at last his brother Compton, who had borne his own floggings with fortitude, but could not so indifferently endure the spectacle of Charles's torment, up and spoke.

The occasion was Sunday, a day which might well have been treated as an armistice. Charles, just before the boys were marched off in double file to Iffley Church, had perpetrated some peccadillo. The church bells were ringing, and there was no time for an execution, so Mr. Slatter in remarking on this fact added, "Never mind, Charles, you shall be flogged after Divine service." Master Compton heard, and his heart swelled beneath his jacket with

indignation. Was it not enough to beat the little fellow?—must mental be added to bodily agony? Not if a word would stop it; and he resolved that, come what might, and the odds were that interference would entail condign punishment, that word should not be left unsaid.

Accordingly, after the function was over, and the boys were trooping sadly back to Rose Hill, he said, "Sir, I wish to speak to you. Do you think it fair to keep my brother in a state of suspense all through church time? You know how nervous he is, already he has suffered tenfold more than any flogging."

Whether it was the point or the audacity of this speech, or a secret dread lest a report to his disadvantage might travel as far as Ipsden, certain it is that Mr. Slatter let Charles off his flogging. Compton's remonstrance, moreover, had an ulterior effect, for though his own back suffered as before, he had the satisfaction of remarking that Mr. Slatter slightly abated his severity towards Charles. Existence, however, even under such mitigated conditions was simply penal. There was seldom or never cricket, no football or

hockey, no fishing or boating at Rose Hill. The boys bathed in Iffley lasher during the summer months, and were allowed to garden in the spring, but there were no games. Two and two, with Mr. Slatter to the rear, the miserable children marched along the Iffley Road for about an hour a day. That was the extent of their exercise. Boyhood could not have been more systematically dwarfed, and the marvel is that the pupils did not emerge from this *peine forte et dur* in a condition of abject idiotcy.

The subjoined are three letters from the small boy at Rose Hill to the family circle. It is superfluous to hint that inasmuch as Mr. Slatter supervised all his pupil's correspondence no allusion to a bleeding and bruised cuticle was feasible. The first is to his mother.

I remember Lucky this
I pretty speedily and kept very
proud of the first 6 pp.
Sallust. Feb 8 1871
Charles Reade

The underscored is
dashy writing

My dear Mother,

I am happy to inform you, our vacation commences on the 22d. inst. when I hope to see you and all at home quite well. As to my progress, I am still reading Cæsar, but I have entered upon Sallust and Xenophon. Give my love to all at home, and receive the same from your dutiful Son,

Rose Hill.
June 1st. 1825.

Charles Reade.

The next seems addressed to Julia and Ellinor. It runs thus:

"My dear Sisters,

"I hope you and Edward are quite well. I arrived at Mr. Slatter's house on the 1st, and at his study on the 2nd, where I have *fagged* with unremitting *industry* till this day. Edward will soon go to India I fear, but I wish he would just come and visit me before he *sails*. I want him to get, alias obtain, us a whole holiday, which is very desirable here, by the way. And if he cannot come, you and mamma must come and beseech Mr. Slatter until he giveth one unto us. Edward gave me a certain book called 'The Son of a Genius,' which I forgot to bring with me. That also you must must bring with 'e.' Mamma's ruler has greatly assisted me in this letter. I have got a Cornu Ammonis, or petrified snake, for you, which you had better come and possess. Tell mamma that quire of paper did not come here. I have got a very bad pen. Shew this letter to mamma and Julia. Write to me any questions about * * * * * keep

this letter till I am back. Keep every other letter of mine till then.

"Your affectionate

"BROTHER."

The asterisks probably refer to Mr. Slatter, who, inconsistently enough, though he perused every line sent home by his pupils, did not read the letters they received. The appeal for a holiday is rather piteous—a respite he might have termed it from the diurnal cane. The "e" for you was doubtless a bit of schoolboy fun at the expense of Mrs. Slatter. In the next letter he drops the same sort of hint in a broader fashion. Probably he had imitated for the amusement of his sisters that worthy woman's Doric eccentricities.

The following bears the date February 17, but the year is omitted. It was in all likelihood 1825. The handwriting is legible.

"MY DEAR SISTERS,

"I am glad you liked my fine letter, and hope you will like this better. I hope *this* —lay a stress—letter will also be better received by you than mamma's, which will reach her on the same day as this does you. Since I have

had more time for the better formation of my letter, having finished this tedious discourse, I enter upon *narratives*. There was a certain word in mamma's letter which I could not make out. It was as follows: 'I am very anxious to know whether you are likely—' something or other? Please ask mamma what it was, and when you write to me, which I hope will be soon, mention it. Edward will most likely be detained by the contrary winds. Write to me soon, and tell me how he does, and all about him. I am afraid he is 'gawn awa frae Ipsden.' I pity his taste, but think he has as many advantages as a young man could expect. I have such excellent eggs, the yelk (*sic*) luke-warmed and the white raw. Mrs. Slatter won't do them any better, though I frequently ask *'er*. I have often wished myself at home to bid E. good-bye. My paper costs me more than you think. It costs a halfpenny a sheet. I have written four letters, two to you, one to Mamma, and one to Compton. Give my sincerest, faithful love to Edward and Mamma, &c. &c., and write soon, I beseech you, to your affectionate brother,

"CHARLES READE."

"I hope to find Julia at home when I come, which won't be so over-soon, by the way. I hoped to see Allen and Julia at this very house. You never knew me to write such a letter before. I beg mamma's pardon for writing to you before her."

The effect of Mr. Slatter's cruelty on a child of a sensitive temperament, yet naturally virile, may have been less absolutely injurious than might easily be presupposed. Charles Reade, be it remembered, was not a London boy, reared in an enervating atmosphere among comforts that might appropriately be termed luxuries. He had been petted, spoilt, and as regards brains, forced, but in other respects his home training had been fairly robust. At Ipsden there were not alone ladies exceptionally cultured, who doted on a clever child, but a hunting and shooting Squire also, with his cohort of elder sons, as fond of the harriers and horses, the woods and the warren, as was their sire. Hence, although Charles both suffered and winced under Mr. Slatter's rod, that terrible weapon toughened his cuticle and taught him to think less of pain. It does not

appear to have utterly stupefied him, as was the case generally; indeed, in after life he was fond of pointing to the singular paradox, that whereas at the cane's point he had learnt like a parrot his grammars, totally without reference to any possible meaning the words might possess, afterwards when he came to be taught by a capable tutor, and Latin was made intelligible, he was amazed to discover the amount of rudimentary philology wherewith his mind was stored. If you can imagine a Turk with no knowledge whatever of English being compelled to learn by heart the entirety of Shakespeare's plays, and then acquiring the English tongue, and with it an appreciation of our immortal dramatist, you will realize exactly the mental process through which Charles Reade's brain was made to pass. The grammars placed in his hand by Mr. Slatter were written in Latin—one might say with truth in canine Latin—and they had to be repeated from end to end verbatim, the learner not being informed as to any meaning the rules or examples might have. Not only so, but such ridiculous doggrel as the "*Propria quæ maribus*" and "*As in presenti*" would have been a useless *memoria*

technica for advanced pupils, while for children just fresh from the nursery they were sheer hocus pocus. Dr. Valpy of Reading, who served as an exalted apology for Mr. Slatter's severity, was said to have publicly birched before the whole school one of his own children for inability to acquire this same hateful jargon, and the horrible agonies they caused the wretched boys of Rose Hill can hardly be imagined, still less described. The system was one which, apart from its savagery, aimed at improving the memory, and it is a fact that gibberish learnt by rote adheres to the brain; nevertheless, oddly enough, Mr. Slatter's pupils had exceptionally bad memories, except for the rubbish he beat into their heads. Certainly Charles Reade was his most brilliant pupil, and yet in after years, as will appear, he all but lost his fellowship owing to the difficulty he experienced in committing to memory the Thirty-nine Articles in Latin. Mr. Slatter, as the cant phrase of the day went, grounded him, *i.e.* forced him by constant torture to acquire what must have appeared to his young mind lunatical gibberish, and it was only when he had subsequently passed through a course of

bonâ-fide teaching that he awoke to the fact of this same unintelligible gibberish being rudimentary philology expressed in dog Latin. A boy of exceptional talent, if he had been placed under a conscientious and able tutor, could with facility have mastered the Latin grammar in twelve months. At Rose Hill in five years he had learnt it, but was perfectly ignorant of what he had learnt. What graver satire could be written on the perverse plan of digesting first and comprehending afterwards! It finds an appropriate parallel in the fervid piety of the Irish Catholics, who sing hymns and litanies in Latin as devotional exercises, without the faintest conception of what they mean. It was the Slatterian system which caused the mediæval priest to sing "mumpsimus" instead of "sumpsimus," and when found fault with to retort that it was all the same.

In justice to Mr. Slatter it must be added, that he fed his pupils satisfactorily. Breakfast, it is true, was not appetizing, the provender being thick slices of stale bread scraped over with imperceptible butter. Dinner, however, was excellent. Mr. Slatter grew his own mutton, and it was a specialty. The culinary

arrangements left little to be desired, and everything was scrupulously clean. Each boy, however, was expected to bring to Rose Hill the stomach of one of Horace's reapers, and to devour everything that was put before him. It was a sin of the first magnitude to leave a fragment of fat or gristle on the edge of your plate, and the boy who did so rendered himself liable to subsequent flagellation.

Now to most young children fat of all kinds superinduces nausea, and therefore the custom of the school was for boys not provided with the stomachs of ostriches to slip what pieces of fat they could not swallow into their pocket-handkerchiefs, the result being, that their jacket and trousers' pockets were in a condition too filthy to be thought of before the end of the half-year. But for this petty tyranny and a *jejune* breakfast-table, the dietary of Rose Hill would have merited our warm encomium. Under its influence a boy like Charles Reade, who was all the worse both mentally and physically for the incessant flogging, contrived to thrive and grow. Birch and cane may have retarded the natural development of his brain, but the mutton made his muscles, and when he left

Rose Hill for good it was as an exceptionally fine, erect, picturesque boy, whose physique was almost phenomenal, but whose education had yet to commence. What little he knew had been imparted to him in the nursery by his sister Julia; for, as regards positive knowledge, its acquisition had been interrupted for five long years, and he had thus to make a fresh start heavily handicapped. Rose Hill had been a palpable error. Nevertheless, incredible although it may appear, Mrs. Reade was so enamoured of its more than Spartan system as to have consigned a nephew to the tender mercies of Mr. Slatter, and, later on, a grandson. It was part of her theory of education that a boy could not be too accurately well beaten, and that the weaker and more tender and more sensitive he was, the more excruciating ought to be his agonies. If only this good lady could in her proper person have suffered the experiences narrated so graphically by the author of 'Vice Versâ,' her theory might have undergone some modification. A five minutes' flogging scientifically inflicted by so consummate a vivisector as Mr. Slatter would have dissipated those fallacious ideas which

caused her to condemn her own flesh and blood to the torment of an inferno.

The precise reason which induced her to remove, after five years' penal servitude, her favourite son Charles from Mr. Slatter's jurisdiction can only be surmised. Possibly she may have found out that he was learning nothing, and withal in considerable danger of being brutalized. Possibly the warnings of her son Compton as to the maleficent effects of Rose Hill discipline may have influenced her. It is even within the bounds of probability that son Charles himself may have whispered in her ear that a little instruction would be more profitable than much beating. Anyhow he was sent to join his elder brother at Mr. Hearn's, a clergyman residing at Staines; but the reminiscences of Rose Hill were perhaps the most unpleasant of his life.

CHAPTER IV.

"AT STAINES."

SCHOOL-LIFE may be a happy epoch, if not the happiest, in man's mortal existence, or it may be much the reverse—a term of years to be held in bitter remembrance. So far as Charles Reade's experience went, he had reason to recoil from such a memory as that of Rose Hill. Nothing save innate qualities of the highest order could have preserved him from becoming under Mr. Slatter's system both dwarfed and dulled. It was a happy circumstance indeed that he quitted that scene of vivisection, and ceased himself to be experimented upon at a comparatively early age. His brain and temperament had still the power of recovery, and it needed only reasonable liberty and intelligent tuition to mature both. His elder brothers had been taught by Mr.

Slatter's rod to revolt from classical study, and to this bathos Charles might have reached but for his providential escape from the domination of that ogre. Two years more of Rose Hill, and it would be safe to predict that he would never have been Fellow of Magdalen, author, and world-renowned celebrity. His very brain must have been flattened into mediocrity by tyranny and terrorizing. Read or witness the scenes of brutality enacted within the four walls of the gaol in the drama-novel, 'It is never too Late to Mend,' and you will find there reproduced his own child-life under Mr. Slatter. "I am so very tired!" is the refrain that must often and often have been wrung from his boyish lips as the cruel cane descended on unhealed wounds, and made him hate the very breath he drew. That raw-boned, iron-faced man was the merciless warder of his drama, and the little boy done to death *himself*. True, the hard master stopped short of manslaughter; but at Rose Hill there was no Mr. Eden to come to the rescue as *Deus ex machinâ*. The boys groaned to the tune of "I am so very tired," till the order of release arrived, and they were set free.

The change from Rose Hill to Staines can only be compared to one from a diet of gall to one of champagne. Compton, who had preceded his younger brother to the charming Berkshire town, made such rapid progress in every respect under the tuition of Mr. Hearn, who combined tutorial work with the cure of the parish, as virtually to have paved the way for Charles. Mrs. Reade had a keen, observant eye of her own, eccentric although she was in many respects; and she could not have failed to contrast the vivacity of the boy in clover with the down-trodden weariness of the boy whose hours were a burden to him. Be that as it may, after Compton had been for a term under Mr. Hearn, Charles was removed from Mr. Slatter's and sent to join his brother.

What a metamorphosis it was! Mr. Hearn, who appears to have been a gentleman, handled his pupils as such, his object being not to dragoon but to develope. He soon discovered what splendid material he had to work upon in Charles, and how it had been cribbed, coffined, and confined under a repressive and ill-conditioned system. Of course he had to commence *de novo*, to explain and guide, to revive

what under Julia had been an ardent, but was now a crushed, love of learning, and to try and save the wrecks of the years Mr. Slatter had wasted. Moreover, he was no martinet. He recognized the wisdom of the *corpus sanum* as dominating more or less the *mens sana*, and in consequence gave his pupils quite as much rope as was at all desirable. His plan was to interfere as little as might be with their amusements, and to utilize to the utmost the all-precious hours devoted to study. Such a master was of course liable to be deceived in matters of trifling moment, for boys will always take advantage of their superior officer's laxity; but, on the other hand, he brought out all that was in a boy. Himself a scholar, not only in regard of the dead languages, but in English also, he possessed in a high degree the happy art of persuading his pupils to think for themselves; and when the pathway of knowledge to the beginner seemed so rough and rugged as to be impassable, his sympathetic mind, appreciating alike difficulties and their solution, was ever ready with assistance. Charles Reade owed not a little of his literary facility to this same humble, obscure Curate of Staines.

As it happened, his fellow-pupils were all boys of parts and capacity. Beside his brother Compton, for whose ability he to the last entertained no small esteem, there were three boys in every respect much above the average under Mr. Hearn's roof. These were Edwin James, afterwards Q.C. and M.P., a man whose forensic brilliance would have certainly secured him the woolsack, but for an error which quashed his career; and with him a brother scarcely less clever; and Mr. William Bovill, subsequently of the Chancery bar. The Staines *régime* was by no means all Thucydides and Cicero, Homer and Horace. Torture not entering into the educational theory of benevolent Mr. Hearn, the boys developed amazing fortitude and enterprise. They soon got to appreciate the value of the old adage, "When the cat's away the mice will play," and inasmuch as their feline supervisor was not always in evidence, were enabled to fulfil the functions of sportive mice almost without let or hindrance. There were rules, of course, rules just sufficiently stringent to render their breakage a luxury; but Mr. Hearn was so absent and unobservant that it really was by no means easy to be

found out. The boys, therefore, or rather the seniors among them, did pretty much according to their own sweet wills, appearances *pro formâ* being kept up, and a little dust occasionally thrown in the master's eyes.

Charles had not been long an alumnus of good Mr. Hearn, when an opportunity was afforded him of "derring do," and that too of the kind to test both his pluck and presence of mind, and also to raise him to the highest pitch of popularity with his schoolfellows. He was between thirteen and fourteen years of age, tall, symmetrical, graceful, and attractive. Ipsden, moreover, had taught him agility, and he was already beginning to display prowess in cricket. Such a boy was well qualified to be the hero of an adventure, and he certainly on the occasion to which we refer played his part as an actor to the manner-born.

His brother Compton, like the old Squire, was a sportsman to the core. He inherited his sire's idolatry of the Ipsden woods, and at that period of his life would cheerfully have accepted the position of gamekeeper had it been thrust upon him. He had therefore, at Edwin James's suggestion, very readily joined with

him in a sort of partnership in sporting dogs. Worthy Mr. Hearn knew nothing of this, for the dogs were kept a quarter of a mile off, and he disdained espionage, so the boys fancied they were safe from detection. A country town, however, has eyes and ears for everybody's business, and some malicious Paul Pry —male or female—carried the intelligence to the tutor. At once that amiable gentleman, who rather plumed himself on a lavish *copia verborum* in the pulpit, and could really at times ascend to eloquence, summoned his pupils *en masse* before him, and without asking questions proceeded to deliver a powerful oration against sporting dogs, and the outrageous wickedness of keeping such incentives to disobedience without magisterial permission. In his tatters-torn passion it was perhaps rather obscure whether, according to his notions, dogs or deceit were the greater evil. On the whole, however, it became fairly apparent that although he hated deceit much he hated dogs more, and meant, if he could, to expel them from the extremest limits of that social circle whereof he was the centre. After much exercitation of lungs and larynx to enforce this

view, Mr. Hearn at last ran down, fairly exhausted; not, however, before, in tones of stern reproach intended to lacerate the guilty conscience, he had urged his auditory, all and singular, to step forward and make a plenary confession.

A dead silence was the only response to this forcible suggestion. The confessional happens to be about the very last place a puerile fly would permit himself to be inveigled into by a magisterial spider. Ergo, Mr. Hearn changed his tactics.

"John Edwin James," he exclaimed in a voice choking with emotion, "be good enough to say what you know about these dogs." We may remark parenthetically, that although Mr. James in after years dropped the "John," that was his Christian name, and by it he was known in Mr. Hearn's establishment.

The embryo Q.C. rose to the occasion. Assuming an air of conscious innocence, he boldly challenged his master to find the dogs if he could. They were, so he hardily affirmed, an *ignis fatuus*, a mere figment of Mr. Hearn's overwrought imagination.

But the tutor was not to be foiled. His

informant had not only told the tale of the pointers and setters, but also where these quadrupeds were lodged. A smile of satirical significance flitted across his features as he replied firmly, "Very well; we will soon see all about that. Be good enough to follow me, and if, John, I detect you in a falsehood, sir,—if, sir, you have added to deceit and disobedience the sin of bare-faced mendacity, why—"

"All right!" was John Edwin James's jaunty rejoinder, and the entire household donned their head-gear and sallied forth, to witness, as they imagined, the discomfiture of the imperturbable offender.

Except one. Charles Reade was fagging away at an ode of Horace, and being naturally of a studious disposition, remained behind without exciting either observation or suspicion. He, however, as will appear, had other ideas in his head beyond alcaics and sapphics. Edwin James had passed him that sort of wink which is proverbially as good as a nod, and he was ready for action, while yet to all appearance immersed in his "Quum tu Lydia," or "Jam Satis." The situation was just dramatic enough to be relished by him dearly, and he

entered into it with all the gusto of Guy Fawkes.

At the back of Mr. Hearn's residence, beyond the garden fence, was a very large meadow, its extreme limit being a sort of broad dyke. Beyond this was situated the cottage and yard of a member of the rat-catching fraternity, one of the Filthy Lucre variety, who was handy for any kind of job, the more illegal the better suited to his tastes. He it was whom Mr. Hearn suspected of harbouring the sporting dogs of Messrs. Edwin James—or John, as he ought to be described—and Compton Reade, and thither the good man marched all his pupils; the principal culprit with rare effrontery engaging him closely in conversation as they bestrode the turnpike road subtending his domicile, until they reached the lane leading to the rat-catcher's abode. Here again the future Q.C. exhausted all his stock of volubility, until at last the entire party faced the rat-catcher's cottage, while their leader knocked at the door authoritatively.

"Where is your husband?" was the brisk demand. The woman smiled as she informed

Mr. Hearn that he had just stept out in the opposite direction.

"Then," said the tutor, "I must trouble you to allow me to inspect your back-yard. I am told there are some dogs there belonging to these gentlemen."

"Dogs!" echoed the woman with uplifted hands, as though deprecating *ab imo corde* any such enormity. "Oh no, sir; there are no dogs. But you can see for yourself."

John Edwin James tittered sardonically, a proceeding which not a little incensed Mr. Hearn, who strode forward into the yard to find, as the woman had said, plenty of kennels, but no dogs in them.

That was James's chance. With an air of triumph he demanded where the dogs might be? "Are the animals mythical or real, sir?" he asked, turning to his master, while his fellow-pupils joined gleefully in a chorus of laughter at Mr. Hearn's discomfiture. Indeed, the impudent boy exceeded the largest limits in his banter, until at last Mr. Hearn, who guessed the trick he had been served, cried aloud in his wrath, "John, John, I could smite thee to the earth!"

And so the party marched back again to the house in solemn silence, and Charles was discovered, as they had left him, cramming his Horace, and oblivious of the very existence of such a vertebrate as the dog.

Nevertheless, it was he who throughout had pulled the wires. No sooner had they started on this march of discovery than, *presto*, his long agile legs carried him swiftly across the meadow, he cleared the dyke at a bound, and in less than two minutes had explained the situation to the rat-catcher, packed him and the dogs out of the house, and, better still, out of sight, and then with all expedition returned by the way he came. Mr. Hearn, though fully aware of being tricked, never learnt who it was managed it so cleverly, and least of all suspected Charles Reade.

The episode was beneficial in two ways to its perpetrator, negatively and positively. Negatively, because Mr. Hearn, being unsuspicious, continued to regard him as his most promising pupil, and lavished on him attention and kindness, both of which were of the greatest service in developing a sensitive child, still smarting under previous ill-usage; and

positively, because thereby Charles Reade won the regard of the cock of the school. Edwin James ruled the roost at Staines, his robust temperament exacting homage imperiously from his fellows, and the fact of his being Charles Reade's patron was largely in favour of the latter's comfort and peace of mind.

As an appropriate pendant to this chapter we give a letter of Charles Reade to his sister Ellinor, the guest of his brother Edward, then the tenant of Ipsden House.

6, Bolton Row, Mayfair,
December 27 (1861?).

"My dear Ellen,

"I am glad to hear you have got safe to Ipsden for Christmas. Keep a good fire in your bed-room, and then perhaps native air will do you no harm.

"I do not like to run any risk of being *de trop*, and I think at this time of the year the master of the house should be allowed to make his own arrangements.

"Mrs. Hearn is in very poor circumstances, and I have sent her £5 this Christmas-tide. I learned her situation from my old school-fellow Bovill, now a Chancery Barrister. I

met her on Clapham Common, and renewed her acquaintance after so many years.

"I enclose her note for your edification, which you can burn after perusal. Will you be kind enough to ask Amy (his niece) to direct you to a woman I shot at my last visit, and lay out on her £1 this cold weather. Blankets—fuel—muffetees—cash.

"I don't shoot women every day, and Christmas comes but once a year.

"I will duly repay you the same.

"Love to all,

"Your affectionate Brother,

"CHARLES READE."

At this time, we must remark, he was not over flush of ready cash, and £5 was really a relatively large sum, albeit contrasted with his munificence later on, it seems almost niggardly. Evidently, on receiving Mr. Bovill's information he lost no time in paying a visit to Clapham in order to discover his former tutor's widow, and this little circumstance testifies indirectly to the gratitude he cherished for that worthy man's careful tuition.

CHAPTER V.

SAVED BY A SECOND.

LIFE at Staines flowed with average smoothness, varied by a few breezes and no storms. Mr. Hearn appears to have kept the main chance steadily in view, and to have energized for his pupil's advancement in classics. Being, however, himself a man with a fine perception of the music of language, a rhetorician if not an orator, he paid especial attention to English composition. In after life Charles Reade bitterly regretted that he had never been at a public school, nor was there any reason why he should not have gone to Rugby or the Charterhouse like his elder brothers. It happened, however, that Mr. Hearn compensated for the loss indirectly. He discovered in Charles Reade one, like himself, with an intuitive capacity for expression, coupled with a

quick perception, a vivid imagination, and a more than ordinary power of generalization. By a strange paradox, a preacher whose model was the vapid Blair, contrived to infuse into his promising pupil a love of epigram, a terse, concise style, and a vigorous method. Mrs. Reade sent her pet son to Staines to be converted into a scholar. That was beyond the utmost *possible* of Mr. Hearn, who had attained to no more than the level of scholarship which satisfied parental ideas at that time of day. But he did better for the boy than if he had been a Porson or a Conington. He taught him how to wield his pen, and that was indeed instruction. None better.

It is a far cry back to the twenties, and Charles Reade left behind him no record of his school days. To the last his mind was so immersed in objects of passing interest, more particularly the drama and literature, that he escaped that retrospective mental attitude which seems to be the normal concomitant of age. He was, too, never a great talker, albeit when he chose to exercise his conversational powers he could be not merely brilliant, but fascinating. Except in a passing allusion to his

boyhood at Ipsden, he seldom dwelt even for a moment on that period of his life, if indeed his brain ever recalled it. For his youth he sighed, sometimes with strange bitterness, as though age had robbed him of his rights; for his boyhood never. Iffley had left so bitter an aftertaste as to cause him to dismiss it finally from his memory, and Staines he seems to have passed by as a colourless episode. Colourless it certainly was, yet it so happened that but for the presence of mind of his brother Compton, its hue might have been strangely darkened. In plain English, he may be said to have narrowly escaped with limb, if not with life.

The parish church of Staines, wherof, as has been said, Mr. Hearn was the assistant minister, happened to be undergoing one of those singular processes of beautification and improvement which the churchwardens of the Georgian era deemed advisable in the interest of æstheticism. True, their notions of art differed remarkably from those of Pugin and Gilbert Scott. Whitewash and stucco were the materials they especially affected, and if an ecclesiastical edifice showed signs of decay, their plan was to tie it, or clamp it, or prop it, or patch

it. This effected, they painted in gold letters on a black ground their services in having renovated their church, and placed this bold advertisement in the most conspicuous place. They thought themselves the Solomons of their generation, and were proud of the title.

Staines Church seems at the epoch we are considering to have needed something more substantial than a churchwarden's restoration, inasmuch as its condition was rickety and tumbledown in the extreme. Moreover, in country towns when George was King the population was much more zealous in its attendance at church than is the case at present, and Mr. Hearn preached every Sunday to a large and possibly attentive congregation. As a disciple of the great and, be it added, good Mr. Simeon of Cambridge, he may be supposed to have drawn, as the phrase went; for rhetoric was at that time of day much in request, and sermons, however ponderous they might be, found ready listeners. Consequently Staines Church, ugly and tottering though it was, filled well, and the congregations were as large as appreciative.

The churchwardens and their *padre*, Mr.

Govett, do not appear to have paid much attention to the insecure condition of the fabric. Archdeacons in those days, albeit they wielded powers of an autocratic character such as they have long since been relieved of, were tolerably indifferent about using them. At the same time, when a church came down with a run, those dignitaries would suddenly awake to the consideration that the province of an archdeacon was, as Sydney Smith tersely phrased it, to perform archidiaconal functions, and in that event the parish was mulcted by a colossal rate. Hence, when Staines Church exhibited at last unmistakable symptoms of converting itself incontinently into a ruinous heap of *débris*, its responsible guardians took fright, and when one of the side walls began to bulge externally, actually commenced repairs in good earnest.

The poor old church, however, was virtually beyond tinkering. It had been galleried, and high pewed, and whitewashed, and plastered; but neither the plaster, nor the whitewash, nor the high pews would support the side walls, which were simply being forced out externally by the weight of the galleries. These walls had not been built to support anything more

ponderous than the roof and their own weight; and though, when the wardens in their wisdom piled Pelion super Ossam in the shape of galleries resting on beams dovetailed into the masonry, the overburdened walls bore their burden bravely without reference to dynamics, still the time came when the extra pressure loosened the said masonry, and then everything betokened an immediate collapse. Too late the churchwardens realized the extent of the mischief, and prepared to act.

They first made the not unimportant discovery, by the simple process of removing the soil, that the foundations were quite rotten. Having satisfied themselves generally of this rather alarming phenomenon, they next proceeded to excavate largely in order to ascertain the full extent of the mischief, a feat of engineering which would have been quite justifiable had they contemplated closing the church. It never seems to have occurred to their minds, that by exposing the foundations and then cramming the galleries with human beings they were making tolerably certain of a collapse, in fact, they were acting with a noble indifference to every architectural

consideration. There is, moreover, a strong and incomprehensible prejudice against pretermitting the ritual of the Church of England for any consideration whatever. *Si fractus illabatur orbis*, the average incumbent would go on with his function, unless indeed nervousness overpowered him, in which event he would secure at any cost the services of a Locum Tenens. This is no exaggeration, since it remains an historical fact, that when Canterbury Cathedral was on fire, and the roof all ablaze, they proceeded with the usual choral service as though nothing was the matter. In the same vein of heroism, though Staines Church was known to be in a highly dangerous state, Messrs. Govett and Hearn, as its Priest and Levite, never dreamt of postponing divine service until after the needful repairs had been completed. Whatever might happen, the sacred routine must be kept up.

The congregation duly assembled in the morning of Sunday, and nothing of an untoward character happened. The good people of Staines were, so it is recorded, rather fidgety, but the success of the morning's experiment reassured them, and an overflowing congrega-

tion mustered for the evening service. Again it seemed as though all would go smoothly, and in truth but few suspected the proximity of peril, when in the middle of the service a crash was heard like unto thunder, and the entire north wall fell after the manner of those of Jericho.

The effect on the congregation can only be described as paradoxical. Had any such catastrophe happened in a theatre, the shrieks and shouts would have been deafening. As it was, the magical influence of Church prevailed over every other consideration. The people did not utter more than a low murmur, but there followed none the less a mad rush to escape, for every one anticipated, not without cause, that the galleries and roof would follow suit, and the church become in a trice a pile of ruins. It was remembered afterwards that the only member of the congregation who uttered a cry was a man with a wooden leg, which artificial prop got fixed tight in a plug, thereby preventing him from motion. The rest in silence made for the doors pell-mell.

Compton, with admirable presence of mind, was among the first to grasp the situation and

make his escape. Then he looked round for his brother Charles. The boy was not visible among the crowd; the rafters had begun to fall like minute guns; the danger was imminent and overpowering. Could Charles Reade have already suffered damage? He was light of limb and agile, well adapted for a stampede. The chances were, therefore, that some mishap had befallen him. A moment's thought, and Compton faced the hurrying crowd blanched with fear at the noise of falling timber, pushed his way through them to the pew where his brother had been seated, and started to perceive it to all appearance deserted.

He was about to emerge for the second time from the church, when by a fortunate instinct he pushed open the door of the large square baize-lined pew to see a pair of legs, and in another second the entire body of his brother crouching beneath the seat. Quickly and resolutely he dragged him forth, whispered that not a second was to be lost, and as he hauled the terrified boy through the church porch, the roof fell.

They were among the last out of the doomed edifice. No one, happily, was hurt, not even

the man with the wooden leg, and in the twenties neither sex dreamt of dying of nerves. But the scene was one to be not inaptly termed melodramatic. It had its serious, and might have had its tragic, aspect, nor was it altogether without its vein of comedy. Staines, like most country towns, boasted a commercial academy, and the pupils of that institution were seated solemnly in the gallery when the crash came. Their pedagogue with fine promptitude propelled his masculine form through the scurrying crowd, and was actually one of the earliest to reach the churchyard with a whole skin. Arrived at that point of vantage, the worthy instructor in the three R's suddenly bethought him of his pupils, who might, for aught he knew to the contrary, at that very moment be undergoing a pulverizing or flattening process. He was naturally an economical man, one who practised in private life all the arithmetic it was his privilege to impart to budding shop-walkers and embryo clerks. At such a crisis, however, he doubtless thought that a little spice of recklessness might be allowable, if not appropriate. Hence in an unwonted burst of extravagance he shrieked, "My boys, my boys! I

will give any one *ten shillings* who will rescue my boys!" To anticipate, the said boys required little or no rescuing, for they were quick to follow their revered master's example; but the lavish offer of ten shillings for a whole school, if alive, induced the pupils of Mr. Hearn subsequently to indulge in a calculation as to how much the life of each member of the Staines Commercial Academy was rated at by its master, and it appeared that the precise sum was threepence!

In Charles Reade's 'Commonplace Book' we find the following references to Edwin James and the above incident, the exact details of which have been furnished by his brother Compton:

(1) *John Edwin James*, late illustrious Queen's Counsel, now these many years under a sad cloud. My old schoolfellow at Staines Lodge. Three years my senior. Such a sharp boy!

(2) This gentleman was my schoolfellow at Staines for more than two years. We were in church there together when the transept fell in. Just as the Vicar repeated his text for the twentieth time, "Woe unto you, Scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites! "—rumble, tumble, rush, cold air, shrieks, yells, etc.

That was the last service Compton was able to render brother Charles as a schoolboy. In the spring of 1827, the latter having turned thirteen, Compton ceased to be a schoolboy altogether, and his younger brother remained under the care and tuition of Mr. Hearn till he was past fifteen. By then it was judged, not inadvisedly, that he had sucked his master's brains dry, and accordingly he was removed to finish his school career under a Mr. Durham, who enjoyed the reputation of being alike a brilliant scholar and one capable of running his pupils successfully for scholarships at the University. The Squire of Ipsden, having himself done nothing better than spend money at Oriel, had imbibed a prejudice against Oxford; but he yielded to his wife's wish, that their youngest and clever son should make the experiment of an academical career, provided that he could carry off a scholarship.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEMYSHIP EXAMINATION.

In the year of grace 1831, the University of Oxford, like the public services, was manipulable by persons possessing that undefined yet potential leverage, interest. A man might obtain a scholarship, a fellowship, a headship, or professorship with little more than a smattering of classics or mathematics, while the highest proficiency in the subjects recognized in the schools did not absolutely ensure any participation in the endowments of the wealthy corporation or its component colleges. At the same time, popular opinion, both in the University and out of doors, was tending in a direction adverse to this corrupt system. Oriel had set a noble example by throwing open her fellowships to the world, her immediate reward being the aggregation of the

grandest minds of Oxford, perhaps we might say of the nation, within her common-room. Cardinal Newman, Keble and Clough, Whately and Arnold, were all fellows of this famous college, whose initiative Balliol with splendid success was soon to follow. The colleges least influenced by what may be termed the Oriel spirit were Magdalen, New College, and St. John's, and it was with the first-named of this trio, the most beautiful of all collegiate institutions, that Charles Reade was destined to ally his name.

Ipsden being situated but seventeen miles from the great academic city, and its hospitality as large and generous as its tone was intellectual, had become by no means a *terra incognita* to the Oxford dons. Plumptre, master of University, a gentleman of ancestry and culture, was an ever acceptable guest at Ipsden House. Dr. Macbride, Principal of Magdalen Hall, then a kind of parasite of the great College, forming as it did an angle of its pile of buildings, was Mrs. Reade's dearest male friend—the good lady boasted such a multitude of dearest friends of her own sex, that it was impossible to compare her superlatives. He was learned, evangelical, benevolent, courtly, and

though a Scotchman, exhibited not the slightest trace of his nationality, if we except a ceaseless industry. Dr. Ellerton, Fellow of Magdalen, was another acquaintance, as also Mr.—nicknamed Corporal—Dornford, Fellow of Oriel, who would have married Julia Reade if the fates had been propitious. Mrs. Reade, therefore, in virtue of an admirable *cuisine*, enjoyed a plethora of the sort of interest which hospitality commands.

Possibly it may have been Dr. Macbride, possibly Dr. Ellerton, who suggested that Mr. Durham's promising pupil should stand for a Demyship at Magdalen. It was rather of the nature of shooting an arrow into the air, for, bar Dr. Ellerton, Mrs. Reade had no string to her bow within Waynflete's College. Dr. Martin Joseph Routh, at that epoch President, and one of the most learned men in the University, who managed to hang on to this mortal coil for ninety-nine years and three months, was a High-Churchman, and that, too, at a period when High-Churchmanship was scarcely even invented. Consequently, to Ipsden he was very much anathema, and doubly so, since he did not care to preserve amicable relations with his next-door neighbour, *ce cher* Dr.

Macbride. Looking back, one almost wonders how it came to pass that Charles Reade, a youth of seventeen, was run for a Magdalen Demyship in the teeth of probability. True, a Rede four centuries back had given the stone whereof the College was built. That, however, was rather a statute-run obligation, and one which the Fellows would have encountered with a sneer had it been put forward as an excuse. Gratitude is hardly the virtue which abounds most in college common-rooms, and the fact of Sir Edmund Rede of Boarstal having virtually built the tenement they inhabited would be one they might by no means relish being flung at them. In fine, but for the chapter of accidents, Chales Reade would never have been Demy or Fellow of Magdalen.

The College at that period had preserved the main outlines prescribed by its pious founder, William of Waynflete, Lord Chancellor to King Henry VI. and Bishop of Winchester. Its rule was relaxed—that of course. There was no mass, no fasts, no prelections in the College Hall, nothing, in short, either Roman or Catholic; while if, as was the case, the Fellows were bound to

celibacy, the president and chaplains were permitted the luxury of the matrimonial state. The revenues of the college, derivable from lands in London, Hants, Lincolnshire, Oxon, and other shires, amounted to about £24,000 per annum, of which grand total President Routh absorbed for his own share one-sixth, the balance being distributed—on very uneven lines—among forty Fellows, thirty Demies, twelve Chaplains and Clerks, sixteen Choristers, an Organist, a Schoolmaster and Usher, a Steward, and several Incumbents who were made comfortable for life at the College expense, in consideration of having formerly been Fellows. Needless to add, the forty Fellows, as the ruling body, appropriated for their own use the lion's share, the seniors being tenaciously careful of their own interests, so that the Demies and other Foundation members received little more than a small pittance. A Demyship, however, had a relative value, in that it led to a Fellowship. The Founder provided that his Fellowships should be restricted to the natives of certain counties and dioceses, parcelling out these preferred geographical areas among the forty Fellows.

Thus, for example, three of his Fellows were to be born in Oxfordshire, but one only in Kent; Lincolnshire, his birthplace, and the diocese of Winton being especially favoured. Anybody born in any one of these selected shires and dioceses was eligible for a Demyship, but after election he had to wait till a Fellow on his county or diocese took a living, married, came into a fortune in land, or died. He would then, if he had taken his B.A. degree, succeed *de jure*, but subject to one condition. There were to be two medical and three law Fellows, and thus a Demy might be required, owing to the Fellow he succeeded being a doctor or lawyer, to embrace one or other of these professions, or to lose his fellowship. Sometimes a Demy waited for a vacancy for ten, twenty, thirty or more years, and cases have occurred of men living and dying as Demies at a green old age, owing to the longevity of the Fellow for whose shoes they were waiting. A Demyship, however, was the first step, and the Fellows coveted that appointment for their relatives.

This brings us to the consideration of how these scholarships — for such they ranked

academically—were bestowed. There was, we may remark *in limine*, no nonsense of merit about them. From any such taint they were as free as the most noble Order of the Garter. There numbered, as has been said, thirty Demies, and taking one year with another, there were from four to five vacancies to be filled up on St. Mary Magdalen's Festival, viz. July 22nd. The 'Times' and other papers duly notified the fact that on that day so many Demies would be elected. From this you might suppose that competition was invited, and that the examination would decide the successful candidates. Not so. The new Demies were nominated by the College officers, and the College officers, with the exception of the president, changed each 2nd of February in every year, "the end of all things" the day was in consequence nick-named. These College officers, need it be related, were selected from the list of Fellows in rotation, and each Fellow served his turn for each office when his year came round. The list was as follows: President, Vice-President, Dean of Divinity, Senior Dean of Arts, Junior Dean of Arts, Senior Bursar, Riding Bursar, and Junior Bursar.

Oddly enough, the College tutors were not considered officers at all unless they chanced to fill for the year one of the above-mentioned posts, the real value of which consisted in the probability of its holder having the privilege of nominating a demy, in other words, of bestowing on a relative an income for life, provided the recipient avoided the fatal noose of matrimony, at all events, until such time as he obtained a College living. If, therefore, there were four vacancies, the President, Vice-President, Dean of Divinity, and Senior Dean of Arts had each a demyship to give away. If eight vacancies, then each of the College officers enjoyed the same privilege; but if one only, then the President alone appointed. It was whispered that President Routh selected the best candidate who offered himself, and this may have been the case at times, but as a rule the one supreme merit in the venerable old gentleman's eyes consisted in being the grandson of some one of his friends of by-gone years. It happened, however, that he kept an eagle eye on the papers of the several candidates, and when a youth conspicuously failed, intimated to the particular Fellow who contem-

plated appointing him that he should oppose his nomination. It was only in the event of a complete fiasco that Dr. Routh took this decided line; more often, when dissatisfied, he would allow the nomination to pass, but remark sarcastically, "Your nominee, sir, may be a very excellent young man, but he is no scholar." In 1831 the example of Oriel had decidedly affected the Magdalen common-room, and the tutors would, if they could, have abolished the nomination system in favour of pure merit. It is necessary, at the risk of weariness, to particularize these details, because without them the election of Charles Reade would be misunderstood. It has all along been imagined that he owed his Fellowship to a nomination as Demy. This is an error. Merit brought him into the College, not favour. He was indebted for his fifty years of Fellowship and four years of Demyship to no human being save Charles Reade. True, had Dr. Ellerton been one of the College officers for the year, it is possible that he might have nominated the talented son of his friend, Mrs. Reade of Ipsden. He was not, however, destined to render her this signal service.

The election was one of those jobs that are neatly managed. It was assumed that any candidate could write an English Essay respectably, and thereupon this was made the *pièce de résistance* of the *menu.* Many an ignoramus justified the distich—

> "And native cheek, when facts were weak,
> Bore him in triumph through."

It happened, however, on this eventful occasion that among the total of candidates was one born essayist, a youth who already could wield his pen epigrammatically. His scholarship was average, though not brilliant, but his English coruscated. The shades of Addison and Gibbon seemed to inspire him. Noctes Ambrosianæ Wilson, alias Christopher North, who had just left the College, cast his mantle upon him, and Collins, the College singer, imparted a spice of his poesy to the candidate's pages. Mills vowed that Charles Reade's essay gave evidence of absolute talent. Old Dr. Routh read it from end to end, and smiled the approval of an octogenarian. For all that, the best man in would have been passed over infallibly—as had been the case before half a hundred times at least—but for

the lucky accident that one of the designate nominees so completely failed all along the line, that President Routh put his foot down and declared with emphasis, that he would not consent to the nomination of an absolute dunce.

That gave Charles Reade his chance. He was *facile princeps* among all the candidates, the only one who had risen above mediocrity. Mills, the tutor, spoke up for him right manfully. The subject of the English Essay was, "How far is Ambition productive of Virtue?" To a man, the other candidates, imagining the College expected them to glorify Uriah Heepishness, proceeded on the old trite track to decry ambition as one of the devastating forces of humanity. Charles Reade, however, being himself wildly ambitious, was not so canting a hypocrite as to abuse a quality he admired intensely. He took pen and wrote *con brio*, yet judgmatically, his ideas. In barbarous days, he affirmed, when war is the only outlet for ambition, ambition showed to the greatest disadvantage as being pure selfishness. But whatever might be said against military ambition had been said already, and to the domain of learning and the arts these

censures were quite inapplicable. Without ambition as a motive power, he contended, there would be no excellence, nothing but a dead level of mediocrity; and he went on to remark, incidentally, that all academic successes were in reality the triumphs of an honourable ambition. Further, he argued that the sole alternative of ambition would be a chaotic stagnation of all the mental faculties, and, in brief, his peroration was the warmest eulogium of the very quality which the other candidates had been gibbeting as the meanest of vices. The effect of this incisive honesty on the mind of a scholar who was reverenced by his contemporaries, including, *inter alios*, Lord Selborne, as a man of genius and conscience, the tutor Mills, was almost electrical. "Good heavens!" the candidates overheard him exclaim in the ear of President Routh, "here is a boy who gives us his own ideas instead of other people's!" Better still, old Dr. Routh, after he had read the essay, endorsed his subordinate's verdict, and thus, as it were, by acclamation, Charles Reade was elected Demy of Magdalen.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDERGRADUATE LIFE.

LIFE in beautiful Magdalen during the years 1831-35 was about as agreeable as it is well possible to conceive. There were at least twenty out of the forty Fellows in residence, and the high table at the dinner hour was the best filled in the College Hall. The senior was old Dr. Ellerton, the next Dr. Daubeny, chemist, botanist, atomic theorist, and in after days President of the Royal Society; the third Mr. Edwards, who was mathematical tutor, and the most dignified and courteous of dons. Mills was the leading tutor; but on the day that Charles Reade was admitted Demy a certain Mr. Robert Lowe, of University, was elected probationer Fellow, and this gentleman, subsequently Chancellor of the Exchequer and

Viscount Sherbrooke, became his private tutor. As might be expected, the College was by no means rich in celebrities. Lord Rosse, the astronomer, had as Lord Oxmantown been Gentleman Commoner; Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, was on the list of ex-Fellows; and President Routh had earned the appreciation of German students of theology. Mr. Lowe, however, and Roundell Palmer, were as yet unknown beyond the confines of Oxford, and Mozley, afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity, an enlightened theologian, did not enter the College till about the date of Charles Reade's graduation. Among his contemporaries were Lord Winmarleigh and Mr. Thomas Chamberlayne, the distinguished yachtsman, who were Gentlemen Commoners; President Bulley, his senior three years, but his constant friend; Bernard Smith, his chief ally, who afterwards joined the Roman Communion and became a canon; Henderson, Dean of Carlisle; Dr. Newman, the Squire of Nelmes, whose eccentricities were for many years the talk of Oxford; Dr. Fisher, the present Senior Fellow; and Dr. Bloxam, the antiquarian, for whom he entertained the

greatest regard. Goldwin Smith and John Conington were later importations.

Those unacquainted with the glories of Magdalen it may be advisable to refer to Macaulay's magnificent description. Since 1831 the College has changed architecturally as otherwise. A new block of buildings faces the High Street, and covers the site of old Magdalen Hall, which, with the exception of a picturesque turret still remaining, was destroyed by fire. A very handsome school-room occupies the south-west angle of the College buildings, and the eastern side of the Chaplain's Quadrangle was rebuilt in 1854. Not only has the venerable Jacobean portal, through which Charles Reade passed to become Demy, disappeared, but also its successor, a well-meant but ill-executed gateway, designed by the elder Pugin. In the deer-park quite half the Caroline elms of 1831 have succumbed to wind and weather; the chapel has undergone a *quasi* restoration by Cottingham; the old organ is no more, but has found a magnificent successor by Messrs. Gray and Davison; the Founder's Chambers and Tower have been restored by Sir G. Scott. To-day the College

is crammed to suffocation with undergraduates, and its President is more than seventy years younger than was Martin Joseph Routh, when he passed away on Christmas Eve, 1854. On the whole, however, the Magdalen of 1831 was a far more charming home than is the Magdalen of 1886. The twenty resident Fellows inhabited the senior common-room, and interfered but little with the gentleman-commoners and Demies, both of which orders enjoyed their own common-room, with a superb cellar of wine, service of plate, and other luxuries. Lectures were few and almost optional. A meet of the hounds afforded an ample excuse for absence, and as there were only two examinations to be passed in a period of four years' residence, the Demies had no cause to weary themselves with books. At Oxford every one, except perhaps the purely betting and equine men, reads more or less; but reading to suit one's bent is one thing, and reading against the grain another. A distinguished Fellow of the College has narrated concerning Charles Reade, that he did not take much interest in the studies of the place, and hence—the sequitur seems rather a negative

one—no one suspected that he would ever obtain distinction as an author. That of course expresses with precision the strong academic prejudice in favour of grooves. The ordinary Oxonian of academical eminence believes *ab imo corde* in the virtue of absorbing the thoughts of the great minds of the past, more especially when those thoughts happen to have taken a purely pedantic and technical shape, and *pari passu* disbelieves in a man of brains thinking his own thoughts. It was enough for the dons of 1831 that a student should write Ciceronian prose and Ovidian verse, know the Aristotelian Ethics by heart, and be able to give the date of the battle of Marathon. To have gorged all that involved capacity, and as for originality, it was outside the calculation. Consequently, when a youth with a natural detestation of grooves of all sorts came to Magdalen, his superiors and equals in the College alike failed to make him out. He neglected his lectures; he played the fiddle; he wore long curls; he footed the double shuffle like a professional, for in spite of an ugly rolling gait he was a perfect dancer, and thought fit to select the egg-shaped

dining-table at Ipsden for Terpsichorean performances to his own accompaniment on the violin—much to the Squire's horror. His raiment was by no means of the subfusc hue enjoined by the statutes, but rather of the picturesque variety. Moreover, oddly enough, this rather eccentric demy failed to appreciate the excellent cellar of the Demies' common-room, having, in fact, a rooted aversion to wine and a positive detestation of beer. Added to which he evinced some sort of preference for the College Choir, and invited one of the leading singers over to Ipsden—a *coup manquè*, for his father, on learning that the pretty boy with the voice of a cherub was the son of a tradesman, promptly packed him off to Oxford. But though not industrious on academic lines, he read voraciously. Oxford is a city of books, of books of every conceivable description, and the future author was thereby enabled to assimilate all the fiction and all the dramas of the past three centuries. Thus he began, while yet but little more than a big boy, to cultivate an innate dramatic talent. Those who in after years were astonished at his rare ability as a stage-manager, little

suspected that some half a century before they knew him he was actually practising parts before the looking-glass. His mother meant him to be a divine, a bishop perhaps. The hen too has no idea when she takes her brood of ducklings to the edge of a pond, just to sip the water, that these young termagants will swim away from her. They had got a duckling instead of a cockrell in Magdalen, and neither Mills' fascinating presence nor Mr. Lowe's splendid coaching could keep him to strictly farmyard lines. While they were explaining the Platonic idea, or discussing the obscure renderings in the choruses of Agamemnon, their pupil's mind was immersed in the contemplation of some ideal Peg Woffington. Yet he did not altogether neglect his pastors and masters. Perhaps he took in about half of what they said, perhaps even more. Neither did he cut his classics or logic; on the contrary, he treated them as very deserving *parerga*. They were not the business of his life, nor ever could be, but in so far as they touched on the drama they excited his admiration. Besides which, he had *de rigueur* to pass, with or without honours, otherwise he would lose his

Fellowship—a serious calamity to a younger son, whose father's estate was entailed. He read, therefore, but reserved his hard work for subjects with which he had positive affinity.

The two contemporaries at Oxford whom he most admired were Roundell Palmer, who had carried everything before him as scholar of Trinity, and Stanley of Balliol, known afterwards as Dean Stanley. With the first, who was Fellow of Magdalen, he had barely an acquaintance; the latter he never knew at all. Both were, unlike him, intensely, exclusively academical, the essential products of Oxford; yet though the difference between their aims and method was so radical, he reverenced each as a man of commanding talent. From their point of view he was no student, but if so, they judged him erroneously. He was certainly never a student in the fields where they obtained proficiency, yet in his own domain, as all who knew him will testify, he was a life-long student, and his labour had its commencement during the uneventful four years when he was Demy of Magdalen.

His contemporaries—those, that is to say, of his undergraduate days—have mostly passed

away, and it is difficult to form an accurate impression of that period of his life. It has been hinted that he was never very popular with the Demies' common-room. He could not, as has been said, appreciate their port. His manner was individual and unsympathetic: he cared less than little for college gossip or college jokes. Newman amused him, but only as a polished buffoon. One or two of the others he did not consider gentlemen—an unpardonable sin in his eyes at that time of his life. It was Bernard Smith for whom he cherished a sincere affection, and afterwards he was positively chagrined when his friend elected to merge himself in the Church of Rome, and not only so, but to embrace Roman orders. He always spoke of that gentleman as of a brother whom he had lost by the sort of misadventure which he could neither comprehend nor quite tolerate. He had been imbued with Protestant ideas. His pet divine, Chillingworth, was the author of a trite but ill-worded aphorism concerning the Bible and the Bible only, and he could quite understand any belief under the sun—or absolute negation —except Popery. Perhaps not a little of his

acerbity towards all things Papistical, a sentiment which he tried to veil in 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' may be referred to spleen at losing the society, if not the friendship, of Bernard Smith.

He was a warm adherent of the Union, then located over the shop of the bibliopole Vincent in the centre of the High Street, a situation far more convenient for Magdalen men than remote New Inn Hall Lane. The old Union rooms were very snug, and when the other Demies were imbibing the vintages of Oporto and Xeres in their common-room, Charles Reade might have been found thereabouts, drinking in greedily the literature of what was even then one of the best modern libraries in Europe. He was educating himself, and though doubtless people voted him a lazy, unsociable member of a small but fraternal society, was following his destiny. His inability to assimilate with anybody and everybody was set down to the score of pride. His election as Demy had been informally protested against by one of the senior Fellows, on the ground that the Founder's Statutes enacted that the Demies should be "poor scholars," whereas he

was the son of a man of ancestry and estate. It is possible, therefore, that his avoidance of the social life of Magdalen may have been misinterpreted. At that time of day the common-room was the sole rendezvous for the gentlemen of the College. There were no cricket matches, no racing boats, no athletics, ~~no fives or racquets~~. There was the hunting-field, pigeon-shooting, and netting the rivers, but so far as amusement went, the fast men rode and drove, while the slow men trudged diurnal constitutionals along the different roads. At Magdalen there were seldom more than twenty undergraduates in residence, and the traditions of the College almost forbade association with out-college men. With its faults and virtues Magdalen kept to itself rigorously, and when a distant cousin who was in residence at Wadham invited Charles Reade to dinner, and introduced him to his friends—very nice, gentlemanly fellows he described them afterwards, as no doubt was the case — he was chagrined and surprised beyond expression to find that the Magdalen Demy, while willing to recognize a relation belonging to another College, positively declined the acquaintance of

Wadham as a society on any terms. To reveal an open secret, the Magdalen Demies were by no means ambitious of the company of strangers, except on rare occasions. They formed a very pleasant little coterie of their own, and disliked its being disturbed. We mention this fact, because it demonstrates clearly and accounts for the small influence exercised by Oxford on the mind and temperament of Charles Reade. He became a privileged member of a small and exclusive College. With his contemporaries within that narrow circle he had few affinities, and did not harmonize; consequently, he lived his own life, and preserved his very distinct individuality unimpaired. It was the bitter complaint of a brilliant Magdalen man in after years against Oxford, that he had come to it inspired, and left it flattened to the dead level of a mediocre average. That student, however, entered vigorously and industriously into the studies of the place. He read for his first, and his mind passed through a severe training, from which it emerged, as he put it, a wreck. Not so Charles Reade. He touched academic Oxford with the tips of his fingers. He was moulded neither by the lecture-room,

the midnight oil, nor the common-room. He brought to Magdalen HIMSELF, and the College doubtless assisted his brain to develope. But it did not spoil him, or pare off those angles which were perhaps, as the crystals on the rock, the most valuable portions of his nature. Had he been sent to Eton or Harrow, he might have learned to be polished and commonplace; had fate consigned him to Balliol he might have adorned the first class, and become Lord Chancellor, for he had the head of a lawyer. He was destined for something less ephemeral. Lord Brougham is reported to have said, that he would rather have written 'Pickwick' than have been raised to the woolsack; and, if we may say so inoffensively, Lord Selborne, Charles Reade's most illustrious contemporary among the Magdalen Fellows, who absorbed all the honours that Oxford and Winchester had to offer, and attained the highest apex of a lawyer's ambition, will be fotgotten when 'Masks and Faces' is remembered and played, and its author's name is held in veneration. That is perhaps an humiliating reflection for the worshippers of divine average, who believe that labour and talent transcend

genius. Time, however, shall be the test, and if the author fails to survive the Lord Chancellor, his authorship will be at fault, for it is genius alone which attains to that happiness which Solon affirmed would not commence until after death—the happiness of literary immortality. We venture to prophesy that it will be a long day before a Magdalen brain shall conceive another Triplet, or create such a climax as the Picture Scene. Unless mankind changes fundamentally, this glorious literary achievement must be rated higher than prize poems, prize essays, scholarships, and all the first-class degrees that ever have gilded talented mediocrity. On the contrary, our conviction remains, that with the spread of education the wide world of thought and reading will command the mere successful plodders to take off their hats in the presence of genius. *Qui vivra, verra!*

CHAPTER VIII.

ELECTED FELLOW.

CHARLES READE's four years of life as an undergraduate Demy of Magdalen were, as he himself phrased it, uneventful. He sucked the brains of Mr. Robert Lowe and Mr. Mills, as well as the shelves of the Union Society. He acquired a smattering of music, and learnt to sing songs, both sentimental and comic, *malgré* a rather throaty voice. He picked up a local musician, who inspired him with something approximating enthusiasm for the violin. Although cricket at the time was almost an unknown game in the University, he practised batting against the local professionals to such purpose, that ten years after he knocked the giant, Alfred Mynn, round the field at Liverpool. His contemporaries voted him an eccentric, but yielded his intellect homage.

His long curls were incomprehensible, so were his ideas. Men could not quite understand how it came to pass that a youngster who could acquire knowledge without an effort, and might have figured in the first class, deliberately preferred fiddling and dancing to Aristotle and Plato. Plodding industry, of which there was a stratum among the Demies, took offence, and indolent stupidity was envious. In the end both orders of student agreed to vote him a mystery. He was not of their sort, and they assumed that he was destined to mount to the skies or go to the dogs, probably the latter. President Routh, however, held him in the highest estimation. Mills, the light of the College, appraised him as a youth of genius, and he gained the regard of another, whose insight into character was throughout his brilliant career more than remarkable.

Samuel Wilberforce had left Oriel disappointed, married Miss Serjeant, and having taken Holy Orders, had accepted the curacy of Checkenden—the Chalken Dene. The Ipsden estate runs into Checkenden parish, so John Reade, who had known him from a boy, was the future bishop's squire. Samuel

Wilberforce, as is generally known, was a skilful rider and an ardent lover of horse-flesh, and he doubtless, as a young curate, was not a little gratified when the Squire placed his stable at his disposal, subject to one condition, that he would never keep the horses waiting, a rule not always observed, the neglect of which too evoked the smart censure of Mr. John Reade, and very nearly led to a rupture of their friendly relations. Mrs. Reade also was unvaryingly courteous and kindly to the interesting curate and his beautiful but delicate wife, and the cordial relations then established terminated only with her death. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that the promising Demy of Magdalen should in the vacations be brought into social relations with a clergyman who was a neighbour and a man of brains. As a matter of fact, Samuel Wilberforce affected a curious interest in the young Oxonian. He took a rapid and accurate survey of his capacity, and they might—in spite of the slight disparity of age—have become friends had they possessed more in common. As it was, they never, in spite of the embryo bishop's chilly advances, quite found a middle term;

indeed, from first to last, with very few exceptions, Charles Reade fought shy of clergymen. Possibly the social life of Ipsden may have created this antipathy. Mrs. Reade was perpetually cultivating bishops, dons, and professors. Her brother-in-law, George Stanley Faber, was reverenced by her as a sort of deity, though his manners were peculiar and his pronunciation unutterable Yorkshire. His nephew, who rendered the name of Faber for ever illustrious, was as Fellow of University a *persona grata* at Ipsden, until he ventured, in defiance of his uncle,—who styled him invariably in common conversation "that *uss* (ass) *mai* nephew,"—to pose as Tractarian, and afterwards to follow Cardinal Newman across the Rubicon. Then there were the Oxford dons, who came to Ipsden partly to air their importance, and still more to partake of its hospitality; and the local clergy, who courted the lady of the open house, and *en revanche* tried, not always successfully, to snub the son. It was perhaps not a matter for wonderment that this same son imbibed a distaste for clerics and ecclesiasticism.

Yet there was never a rule without an

exception. Among the divines specially affected by his mother was Pearson, Dean of Salisbury. That eminent ecclesiastic had two clerical sons, whereof the elder, Charles, became afterwards Rector of Knebworth, by favour of Lord Lytton. This gentleman was a frequent visitor at Ipsden, and though by quite five years the senior of Charles Reade, cultivated his acquaintance, and in after years persuaded him to become his frequent guest. He was of all clerics the most frigid and unsympathetic, but withal thoughtful and reticent—qualities a writer would naturally prefer to garrulity. To the last he was Charles Reade's chief clerical friend, a condition which would have been impossible had they not assimilated in the days of youth and buoyancy.

The period of undergraduate existence passed smoothly, and ended, if dramatically, none the less propitiously. As has been stated, the rule of the College was that a Demy succeeded only to a Fellowship on his particular county, and also on the express condition that he had, previously to the next ensuing St. Mary Magdalen's day after the vacancy occurred, taken his degree. In the early

summer of 1835, when Charles Reade was of sufficient academic standing to graduate, having been four years in residence, such a vacancy occurred quite unexpectedly on his county—Oxfordshire. As it happened, however, he was not prepared for his great-go, the chief examination, and yet his chances of a Fellowship hung upon his satisfying the examiners. Never was there so grave, so painful, so critical a dilemma! He had purposed to defer the ordeal until after the long vacation; and yet his whole future turned on his scraping through an examination for which he had only read in a desultory sort of fashion. It was June, and he had at a day's notice to enter his name on one of two lists—either that of pass-men, or of those *qui honores ambiunt*, i. e. intending honour-men. The regulations then prescribed that the pass-men were examined *first*, and disposed of for good or evil. This occupied about three weeks, after which the honour examination commenced. Now if Charles Reade had put down his name for a pass, he would have had at once to submit to the ordeal of paper-work, and in all human probability would have secured an inevitable

rejection. He could not master his books in a few hours, and though the pass examination was light and easy as compared with that for honours, still ignorance of the authors offered would not have been excused. Consequently there was no hope for it but in a bold stroke, and with the bait before him of a provision for life our author did not hesitate. He entered his name as a candidate for honours, went back to his rooms, and set to work manfully to lick his chaotic reading of the past few years into shape. His wildest ambition was to be gulfed, *i.e.* reduced to the level of a simple pass, yet awarded a testamur. Were he, however, to break down absolutely in any one subject, even this latitude would be denied him. His task seemed simply impossible, and wiseacres prophesied the nemesis of fiddling and dancing. Night and day, day and night, with bare intervals for food and sleep, the youngster of brain-power and singular concentration stuck to his books. He had to carry the Ethics, in Greek as well as English, in his head; to translate respectably so many plays of Æschylus; to remember the text and matter of Thucydides and Herodotus; to

render Cicero into Addisonian English, and Addison into Ciceronian Latin; to write disquisitions on mental and moral philosophy, as well as on ancient history; to play at versifying in Latin and Greek; and to give an analysis of Anglican theology, with Bible history *plus* Logic. But that was not all. The University in its wisdom had decreed that each candidate should repeat by heart such selections from the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion in the Latin version as the examiners might require. This amounted to a parrot-like exercise, and the examinees usually deferred committing such dry matter to memory until the last few days before the schools. It was considered a sort of humane knight-service for a man's friends to take him round the college walks—three quarters of a mile—and cause him to repeat these thirty-nine symbols to friendly prompting. The article on Predestination, being the most prolix, was the biggest fence to be surmounted, and examiners of a malicious turn were suspected of an undue preference for that crabbed piece of Latinity. All prudent men, notwithstanding, while devoting especial attention to the *Articulus de Predestinatione*

gorged also the rest. There was then, as now, no accounting for the caprices of examiners, and a man who knew thirty-eight articles by rote, so as to be able to repeat them verbatim without blinking, might be ruthlessly rejected for his ignorance of the thirty-ninth.

Charles Reade, following in this particular the multitude to do evil, procrastinated. This was unwise, for he would be allowed errors in his ethics or plays, but not, by a silly paradox, in the all-precious Thirty-Nine Articles. Hence, when, thirty-six hours before the examination, he began to repeat these forty save one tests of orthodoxy, memory, and scholarship,—as the academic pundits imagined them to be,—his friends, perceiving how hard he found it to learn by rote, began to prophesy his collapse. But the worst was to come. Although it was midsummer, the terrible strain of the past three weeks had affected his nerves. Neuralgia supervened, his face swelled, he was racked with agony, and positively could not acquire the Thirty-nine Articles.

"I can say three of them," he remarked sadly to a friend, as, swelled cheek and all, he marched off to the schools to face fate and

the examiners. Slatter's severity had sickened him of learning by heart, and indeed incapacitated him for an exercise wherein the stupidest are commonly the most proficient. But to learn against the grain, and with such pain as seemed to crush his very soul, that was impossible. Nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of every thousand, given such conditions, would have been asked any and every article except the aforesaid three. Charles Reade, however, was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Throughout he was nothing if not the spoiled child of fortune. Incredible as it reads, it is none the less a positive fact, that he was required to repeat one of those magic three, and performed this *tour de force* with such *aplomb* as quite to satisfy his questioning Minos, who at once vaulted to the conclusion that the Demy whose Fellowship hung in the balance had not failed to make doubly sure of this petty test. Had he suspected that he was totally ignorant of thirty-six out of thirty-nine, the result would have been different, for at that time of day the reverence for oaths, subscriptions, *et id genus omne*, amounted to a fetich. "Will you," asked the Vice-Chancellor

of Mr. Theodore Hook of St. Mary Hall, when that practical joker came up for matriculation, "subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, sir?" "Forty, if you wish it," was the glib response, and the extraordinary solemnity of this empty form was preserved up to the days of Dr. Cotton, who addressed boys from school as though they were Ordination Candidates, and the shibboleths they were ready to subscribe blindfold were safeguards against heresy. All that has been changed since those days. Boys are no longer expected to be theologians, nor St. Athanasius protected against the surreptitious Arianism of the playground. In 1835, however, everybody was expected to think in the same groove as his neighbour, whether cleric or lay, and it may consequently be recorded as a characteristic of the Oxford of that day, that one of her most brilliant sons would have lost his fellowship but for, in plain English, a lucky fluke.

The aforesaid turn of the wheel saved him. His ethics were respectable; his plays at his fingers' ends; his logic mastered; his prose and verse fair; his essay, of course, brilliant. It was no question of plucking, still less of

gulfing, but rather of the class to which he was entitled by virtue of an unequal, yet by no means incompetent, examination.

They gave him a third. That is to say, he took as good a degree as Cardinal Newman, Archbishop Thomson, and Regius Professor Mozley. Though only in the third class, his name stands forth as the most illustrious of the honour-men of that year, justifying thereby the trite paradox that the third class has beaten the first—in the race of life.

That sufficed. On July 22, 1835, he, as B.A., succeeded in due course to his Fellowship, his first year being, nominally, one of probation. He was only twenty-one, yet academically on the same plane with Doctor Daubeny, Roundell Palmer, and Robert Lowe. He elected to become a law Fellow, and prepared with that intent to enter at Lincoln's Inn, and after his probationer year — which entailed residence—at Magdalen was terminated, to eat his terms and be called to the bar. His brother Compton had married and become a limb of the law, and it was pre-supposed at Ipsden that the brothers would work together for their mutual advantage. It happened,

however, that the younger of the two had other aims. The law was to be his parergon only, his ergon literature, albeit as yet neither he himself, nor his friends, nor his family, imagined that fate had designated him for anything nobler than chambers, a horsehair wig, and perhaps a silk gown. His mother alone mentally predicted that he would be a second Sir Robert Rede, and add to the galaxy of family worthies the portrait of another Chief Justice. Verily her charity was of that sort which believeth all things!

CHAPTER IX.

STUDIES LAW.

HAVING attained the acme of most men's academical ambition, a Fellowship, and one too in the most beautiful and opulent of colleges, our author had the choice before him of three professions—the Bar, the Church, or Medicine. At the present moment a Fellow of Magdalen may be non-professional, a scholar *et præterea nihil*. Such, however, was not the intention of the pious and munificent Founder, who, being nothing if not priestly, imported a small element of jurisprudence and medicine into his college simply with the design of making his clerical Fellows in a small degree conversant with these two sciences. Waynflete has been accused of liberality, a compliment his Church would consider rather back-handed, because though he insisted on his foundation being

monkish, he admitted within its bosom as lay monks a meagre half-dozen amateur lawyers and doctors. A glance at his volume of statutes, with their elaborate regulations concerning the ritual of the chapel and his apparent indifference, so long as the ritual was performed in *sæcula sæculorum*, whether the number of the Fellows was few or many, would dispel this illusion. In 1835, when Charles Reade was elected probationer, the mediæval statutes, paradoxically enough in all respects except the performance of the Founder's favourite ritual, were in full force, and when Parliament subsequently did interfere, a cry of sacrilege was raised from men who had never, and could never, obey the Founder's intentions even so far as to say mass for the repose of his soul, and for the souls of King Henry the Sixth; Sir Edmund Rede Lord de Boarstal; and Sir John Falstaff. The College elevated the Founder's statutes into a matter of principle, because they wished to manipulate estates to suit their own convenience and enrich themselves individually. In those days, when a poor living fell vacant, it was raised to a thousand a year out of the monies bequeathed

by Waynflete for the maintenance of the Chaplains, Demies, and Clerks; and when a lease ran out, a heavy fine was exacted from the tenant in order to put ready money into the Fellows' pockets, the man thus mulcted becoming, however, virtually the owner of his tenure for a long term of years. In order to put a fair gloss on such very equivocal arrangements, the common-room talked bombastically about the rights of the pious Founder, and the sin of traversing them; as though they had not been really abrogated ever since the Reformation, saving for a short interval in the reign of James the Second, when the Protestant Foundation was expelled and Papists intruded! Looking back on the career of Charles Reade, it is tolerably evident that the Bar, as a profession, was to him valueless, indeed, it may have been detrimental, for it encouraged that spirit of litigiousness which at times almost embittered his existence. It was, however, forced upon him. The rod of Mr. Slatter, and the rather Puritanical simplicity of home, had caused a mind naturally religious to revolt from religion, at all events as exemplified by the section of the Church of England to which

his mother was attached, albeit it is only fair to the Evangelicals of that day to add, that he believed in them far more than in the port-imbibing High Churchmen, who jobbed away the College property without conscience or decency. In fact, from the beginning to the end of the chapter, he was never quite a *persona grata* to the Fellows of Magdalen, and at the outset his unpopularity all but cost him his Fellowship.

The rule of the College was that a probationer Fellow should reside during his year of probation, a regulation which lost a man a year at the Bar, since, not being a bird, he could hardly eat his dinners at Lincoln's Inn and pernoctate at Magdalen. The G. W. R. in those days was not in existence, and to cover a long fifty-six miles of road between dinner and bed-time every day would have been a feat alike expensive and fatiguing. Most lay Fellows found this period of penal residence a grievous infliction. Too young to enjoy either the port or the puns of the senior common-room, too elastic to harmonize with men not merely their seniors, but too often prematurely senile owing to the subtle deterioration of lethargy and

liquor, the probationer Fellows must have voted their Fellowship an illusion. Nothing to do and money to do it with is not an unmixed blessing, and certainly Charles Reade, a young man alike eupeptic, active, and adventurous, felt bored by his College, and out of tune with its lotus-eating ethics. The year, however, passed, and after that he was free to live where he liked. He must be called to the Bar, but need never hold a brief, and might refuse to hold office in the College when his turn came. His year of probation expired on June 22nd, 1836, and he seems to have lost not a moment in commencing what was then supposed to be the business of his life. He entered at Lincoln's Inn in the November of that year. The subjoined epistle to his fond mother gives an idea of his earlier impressions, and at all events possesses the merit of being natural. It is addressed from the chambers of Mr. Charles Waring Faber, B.C.L., of the Chancery Bar, the elder son of the prophetical Master of Sherburn Hospital, and his first cousin. Mr. Faber was a most charming and genial gentleman, who had taken honours at Oxford, was a model of industry, a professional diner-out

in an age when conversation was cultivated as an adjunct of gastronomy, and a confirmed bachelor. He rose to a certain level in his profession, but never beyond it, and throughout his long and meritorious life played an unostentatiously charitable part. Few men gave away so liberally, and yet were so little accredited with generosity. He seems to have acted elder brother to Charles Reade at starting, and certainly they were cousinly friends to the end of the chapter.

The letter to Mrs. Reade runs thus:

12, King's Bench Walk, Temple.
Nov. 12, 1836.

"My dear Mother,

"I am at length initiated in these mysteries of Themis, and turned loose with my brain on — smoke, amidst the cabalistic wonders of the law's glorious labyrinth. My companions have the start of me by six months of actual reading. I hope you opened Edward's letter. There are one or two things in it that puzzle me: he insists upon my travelling, without telling me where I may get the means of so doing, and talks about my *academical fame* (!), warning me against resting satisfied

with *that*, which ought to be but an earnest of my future career. Now I deprecate sincerely the latter part of this, *because* I assent so fully to the former. Mr. Warren has gone down to Cambridge for a day upon some business, and before he returns I hope to catch my comrades in the book we are studying: from what I see of the study, its natural effect upon the mind must be to improve the memory, and give a habit of attention and strict accuracy—for every particular word in every individual sentence has a meaning which may be of very vital importance, so that you soon learn that it is not enough to glance your eye over the propositions and possess yourself of their general meaning. I am in C. F.'s (Charles Faber's) rooms, and shall not quit them immediately, as I have been at the expense of buying keys. I am waiting too to see whether you come to town or not. Compton sent down a letter containing a draft, though I had told him I was about to return, but, *n'importe*, I received it to-day, and it is of no use to me till the 24th. I shall go and call on the Shepherds and Anderdons next week, D.V., if I can find

them. It is getting so dark that I, having no candle, must conclude, with a promise to write better next time.

"Your affectionate son,

"CHARLES READE.

"*Saturday Eve.*

"P.S. I think Norfolk Street may very likely be my habitation, where the lodgings are good and cheap. I am determined to get to the bottom of the Snow mystery to-morrow, by the aid of the pew-opener."

This last sentence constitutes in itself a mystery not destined to be unravelled. There was a family of the name of Snow at Bibury, near Sir John Reade's residence, on the borders of Gloucestershire, who were interested in the ill-starred banking firm of Strahan, Paul, and Bates, but whether the party named Snow here darkly alluded to was one of the Gloucestershire Snows must remain the subject of conjecture.

Within three weeks from the date of the above letter to his mother there followed one to his father, redolent of the pedantry of Oxford, and written in so artificial a style as

to be almost ludicrous. In addressing "My dear Father" the youngest son adopts the distant attitude of the diplomatist. It is not indeed a letter at all, but a formal essay, inspired partly by Addison's Walk and Sir Roger de Coverley, partly by the Aldrich, Aristotle, and .Plato lectures of his College, and emanating in no sense from himself. One can but smile as one reads how the junior Fellow suggests that his sire should begin by defining happiness. This alone brings back the jargon of the lecture-room, so stereotyped that the same words, the same phrases, and illustrations were passed on from tutor to pupil, and when the pupil became tutor, he in turn passed it on to other pupils. The conclusion, by the bye, reminds us of the juvenile town-mouse inviting the venerable country-mouse to pay a visit to the urban granaries. Doubtless the old Squire was tempted by this picture to emerge from the solitude of Ipsden. Some four years later he actually did descend on the metropolis to see the young Queen open Parliament. It was cold, and the Squire not only surmounted himself with two great-coats, but also with a huge cloak.

Underneath four garments, therefore, and in the fob of his trousers, was his watch, and in the breast-pocket of coat number one, his purse. The crush to see the show was so great that the party could not drive up to the rooms in Palace Yard, where they had secured seats, but had to walk some two hundred yards along the pavement. This proceeding took about twenty minutes, during which brief period the Squire was relieved of his purse. One would have imagined that he would have been indignant. Not so. The old gentleman, chairman, by the bye, of the Henley Petty Sessions, was vexed, but quite for another cause. It was because he could not discover the thief. "I profess," he said, "that this must be the identical thief who robbed me twenty years ago. No one else could have been so adroit. If I could find the fellow, I'd give him a ten-pound note for his cleverness." And this was not affectation. The fine old gentleman resembled his son Charles in that he positively revelled in a startling paradox. The following is the epistle to which we refer. It is under date of November 26, 1836.

"89 *Chancery Lane.*

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"The most ancient strife that ever I heard of is the war between wave and rock upon the Shore of River or Sea, so often commemorated by Poets of every class; but next to this I think (for it is a rivalry many hundred years old), is the competition between Town and Country, each of which, as heretofore, still claims for itself to be called the dwelling-place of human happiness; and hacked as they have been by so long a warfare, both still employ the weapons which gleamed in their very first encounter. Intellectual improvement is pitted against Health, 'prime blessing of all,' 'Wit' on the one hand is met by 'Innocence' on the other, and if this competition advances with the promise of pleasures glowing, keen, and various, the other is not backward to proffer such as are less apt to be followed by pain and regret: these are the old topics, to which I add a less common item of comparison, viz. that in the Country there are fewer tempters and temptations in the week; in the Town more Jeremiahs to thunder over your conscience on the Sabbath. He who

would decide this question, with mankind taken generally for its subject, must begin with settling the definition of earthly happiness and the means of acquiring and keeping it, points of discussion which after severely trying the wisdom of the Ancient World were by it left undecided: or else he must approach the discussion in that noble spirit of self-confidence which foreruns a notable disgrace almost invariably: but, if you put common-place people out of consideration, the difficulty in my mind is diminished by $\frac{4}{5}$ths or rather $\frac{999}{1000}$ths, which I believe is about the proportion of Men of Ability to the Mass: in the country the intellects of Men are stagnant and putrescent, they dawdle in their thinking as they do in everything else: an hour and a half at a meal, three hours and a quarter consumed in a ride of twelve or thirteen miles, and after dinner the hours they sit with little or hardly any interchange of thought, and then after tea they go to bed and pass the night in a weakly sleep, as they did the day in an unrefreshing dose. *Here* a man so clearly sees by looking out of a window for 10 seconds, that if he dawdles he will be distanced, that he cannot help shaking

himself. Then the information which one imbibes almost involuntarily at every pore merely by being in the Metropolis! I have observed at Oxford, that if we entertained at our table a Metropolitan, he was sure if conversable to be the star of the company: in that very common topic, Politics, he was sure to be very superior because he knew a number of matters such as either slowly or not at all travel into the country, but which throw a light upon the state and intention of parties; he had picked up some little things the editors of newspapers did not know or had not the wit to think important: he had been present and heard the Speech in question, and begged leave to correct 'The Standard,' which he thought he could with the more effect, if he just hinted at a theory that paper wished to establish, by misrepresentation, if no other way appeared. Londoner. 'Mrs. Norton has a poem in the press, Lady S. a novel which she has paid H—d a hundred pounds to puff in the Quarterly, and Galt has a rival 'Curiosities of Literature' to D'Israeli's coming out. Country M. 'You don't say so! Why I have seen in none of the Litera—' L. 'No, I dare say not, but though

I am not a literary man I generally hear what is going on, whether I will or no, from some friend who writes in the Reviews or from literary gossips of one kind or another, a long time before the Newspapers are told.' In this way a Dunce from London attracts and deserves a certain degree of respect: London the Focus of Intellect and virtue, the very heart of this great kingdom, the seat of legislature, the Throne of Pleasure, the place where everything that affects the condition of Britain seems to begin—Opinion, fashion, luxury, comfort, knowledge, Law. If I had not been an Egotistical dog, my dear father, I should have told you in fewer words that I am satisfied with my situation: and reserved more paper to let you know that the same place is well adapted to your present condition. Ever since I have known you, you have divided your time between the business or pleasure of the fields, and an easy diffusive sort of reading, but if I were asked which way your literary taste ran, I should say for amusing and *illustrative* antiquities and for a kind of 'curiosities of knowledge.' As for a time your range of Agricultural employment is narrowed, embrace your other resource more

closely, and make it supply the want of the other. This is a place where 'curiosities of knowledge' may be gleaned by handfuls in more than one way: they may be gained by reading curious and scarce books which you could not find elsewhere; or they may be seen in abundance in the course of a single walk in this wonderful city. What for instance can be more curious, interesting, wonderful, than the mysteries of trade and commerce; the practical and speculative skill of persons employed in its different parts: the lading and unlading of ships, the appearance of the various cargoes, the Division of labour, the arrival of precious freights from every part of the Globe, which owns no country that does not pour its riches into the bosom of our favoured land; the various Galleries of pictures, to which additions have been made since you have seen them, the works of the old masters, which improve upon the sight and are always new, the Museum, to which Compton can admit you and where you may read books that you never could anywhere else: The courts of justice where you may see the working of our glorious system? I could enumerate more objects of interest, and

yet I know little of London; and I dare say I have omitted many things that you remember. With regard to the atmosphere, as it does not affect me, I am no judge farther than this, that in all candor I know no time of the year in which town and country are more upon a par than this: in fact my experience of a London and Scot's Common fog drives me to a vulgar proverb, though not inappropriate, as it too is founded on an observation of a Natural Phenomenon: viz. 'There is no choice amongst rotten apples'!!!!!!!! There have been, I believe, only two fogs since I have been here, and November is the misty month. We shall be a jolly party if you come up. You will have me in the evening, and doubtless renew your acquaintance with many pleasing friends: Love to Ellen,

"Your Dutiful Son,

"CHARLES READE."

Of Charles Reade's career as a law student we have but scanty records, and those of slender interest. Among his legal acquaintances of the epoch were Chief-Justice Sir N. Tindale, Mr. Benjamin Shaw, Q.C., Mr. Justice Lush,

Mr. Edwin James, Q.C. and M.P., and Vice-Chancellor Shadwell. It was a curious coincidence that his first instructor in law should have been Samuel Warren, author subsequently of 'Ten Thousand a Year.' One might have pre-supposed that there would have been an almost perfect assimilation between the brain that conceived Tittlebat Titmouse, and that which evolved Triplet. Yet, sad to relate, the two of a trade failed to agree, and after a year of Mr. Samuel Warren, Charles Reade shifted his seat to the chambers of Mr. Matthew Fortescue, a warm friend of his brother; and then—to reveal an ugly secret—dropped the law altogether for some years. In fact, though he entered at Lincoln's Inn in 1836, he was not called to the Bar until 1842.

CHAPTER X.

"MAGDALEN."

AFTER Charles Reade had been admitted actual Fellow, a certain Dr. Sewell, brother of the Founder of Radley College, and of the Warden of New College, claimed a lay Fellowship in his stead. Had the claim succeeded our author would have had to take Anglican Orders, or be ejected from his Fellowship. In his MS. he gently describes what was really a very barefaced attempt to jockey him. "There are only six lay Fellowships out of forty in Magdalen College," he writes, "and I claimed one. Mr. Sewell, a Queen's Counsel, about to succeed to a Fellowship, claimed it too, on the score of his being of higher standing *in the University* (i.e. not as a Fellow). The matter turned on the interpretation of a statute; the College officers, by a majority of one, decided

in favour of Sewell. I appealed to the Visitor. The Visitor directed the case to be heard before him. Neither side employed counsel. I was victorious, and won my first litigation out of eighteen, and retain my Fellowship to this day."

This tells only half the story. President Routh, at first adverse, was won by his masterly argument over to his side. The Visitor was the Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Sumner, his mother's friend; who, however, to be quite impartial, referred the case to his legal assessor. The College was so indignant at their decision being over-ruled, that they passed a vote allowing Dr. Sewell to retain his Fellowship as a layman. Had Charles Reade lost, *he* would have had to be ordained, or retire. A different measure was meted to Sewell; the plain truth being that he was popular with the common-room. In this College kissing has always gone by favour, and the alumnus who is not so fortunate as to obtain its favour must expect that sort of dissimulated love which proverbially kicks its recipient down-stairs. It may be remarked, passim, that the boasted Founder's statutes were cast to the four winds

when the interest of a *persona grata* chanced to be jeopardized. It is to be hoped that this spirit of partiality has died a natural death.

It was between the adverse decision of his unrighteous judges of the common-room, and the reversal of this act of attempted injury, that an episode occurred in the life of Charles Reade which may perhaps provoke a smile. It was suggested to him by President Routh, that if he chose to abandon the law and take his degree in medicine, the College, which was determined that, right or wrong, Dr. Sewell should pose as one of their law Fellows, might graciously permit him to hold a lay Fellowship. Perceiving that nearly all Magdalen was against him, and naturally being most unwilling to lose his Fellowship, Charles Reade went to Edinburgh to ascertain whether he could overcome his strong prejudice against the dissecting-room and theatre. He thought he would begin with the latter as being possibly the less severe ordeal to his sensibilities, if not to his stomach. The experiment was not destined to succeed. He forced himself to enter the operating theatre, and saw a man bled. This was enough. Staggering to the door, he

fainted away, and left Edinburgh, venesection, and horrors to people of a tougher fibre and a more material nature. Had it not been for the good Bishop of Winchester, and had Medicine offered the only medium whereby he could retain his Fellowship, Charles Reade would have succumbed to fraud rather than have escaped at the cost of his moral and mental cuticle. As the event proved, he was avenged by a prelate who assuredly never more thoroughly magnified his office than when he defeated a common-room conspiracy; and from henceforward till his last breath the subject of this memoir drew his alimony from an unwilling and unsympathetic College.

He was, however, though victorious, none the less disgusted. His enemies were they of his own household, and he felt that they need not have been in such a hurry to decide against one who might yet do their body credit. The consciousness, however, of being out of place in the society of which he was a member drove him afield. He might have lapsed into a mere Oxford don. As it was, he roamed abroad to learn in Paris the rudiments of dramatic art and educate himself for the

profession of letters. His enemies by their very malignity had done him a good turn. They saved him from Magdalen.

That institution, for some time after this episode, seldom saw him except on urgent business; albeit, the first occasion that took him to Oxford, after the Sewell trial, terminated in a way very gratifying to himself.

A certain Mr. Viner founded scholarships and fellowships in law open to the whole University. The Masters of Arts were the electors to the scholarships, and a scholar in due course became a Fellow for a term of years. Practically, the man who, being otherwise eligible, *i. e.* a graduate, a barrister, and a layman, could command the most votes, might anticipate success. Charles Reade, on a vacancy occurring, resolved to offer himself as a candidate. In the coaching days M.A.'s could not so easily crowd to Oxford as at present, and the election was usually determined by the votes of the residents, for the most part College tutors and Fellows. It occurred to him that the county might swamp the University, and his father's influence in the shire may be estimated by the one fact of his having been twice invited to

represent it in the Tory interest. His college might not accord him its support, albeit there was a sort of code of honour prohibitive of opposition to a member of the society. But for once he could dispense with it. The noblemen and gentlemen of Oxon and Berks, who happened to be Masters of Arts, readily promised their votes and interest to the son of Mr. Reade of Ipsden. His mother canvassed the clergy, and where favourable answers were obtained offered conveyances free of cost. On the day of election Oxford swarmed with squires and parsons whipped up for Charles Reade, and thus when he came in head of the poll by a substantial majority, some chagrin found expression within the bosom of his College.

Charles Reade felt, and with reason, that he had administered a practical rebuff to his friends the enemies in Magdalen, so by way of enjoying their discomfiture did a deed his soul usually abhorred, viz. put in an appearance at the solemn High Table dinner.

They drank his health in the College brown-sherry with the regulation formal courtesy. The etiquette of the High Table demanded

that a victory for the society should be recognized, and the victor congratulated.

Soon, however, the nasty animus beneath the surface began to crop up.

"It is all very fine, Reade," said one of them, whose tongue was less guarded than that of the majority, "but you know you have displaced two better men than yourself."

It is easy to imagine the *susurrus* of sarcastic laughter that encircled the table as Charles Reade was thus rudely challenged. Said he quietly, "No; better scholars, not better men."

"How so?" was the cutting rejoinder.

"The Vinerian," replied Charles Reade, "is a law scholarship, and law is a practical sort of science. Now the way in which my canvass was organized and carried out was rather unusual, but it argues a talent of the practical kind superior to that of my competitors. The University in its wisdom has chosen right."

The High Table as a whole may not have endorsed this apologia of the successful candidate, but some of the best minds of the College had the wit to perceive the rising star. Among them may be mentioned Bulley, successively

Senior Tutor, and President; Newman, the wit of the College; Fisher, the present Senior Fellow, for whom, as being a gentleman, Charles Reade to the last professed the warmest regard; Bloxam, the antiquarian; and Mozley, leader-writer to the 'Times,' and afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity. To this honourable list must be added the names of Dr. Daubeny, the exploiter of the atomic theory; and Mr. Edwards, the mathematical tutor. As for President Routh, his regard for Charles Reade was so thorough, that when he received from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge a request to name one of the Fellows of Magdalen as a recipient of the degree of M.A., *honoris causâ*, in that University, on the occasion of the installation of Prince Albert as its Chancellor, he at once sent in his name, and this, be it remembered, before he had written a line. The few men of brains, whom the institution at that period could boast, already began to appreciate the future author. It was the scum of the College that formed itself into a hostile clique, and throughout endeavoured to render Magdalen an impossible place of residence for a gentle-

man, who though physically robust, was excessively sensitive.

In 1845 the office of Dean of Arts, tenable for a year, fell in due course to Charles Reade's option. He determined to refuse it, albeit by such refusal he would have forfeited the Vice-Presidency when his turn came, the regulation being that a Fellow must take all the College offices in succession, or abandon his claim to them. Moreover, the Dean of Arts would probably enjoy the privilege of nominating a Demy, *i. e.* of making some fortunate gentleman a present of an annuity for life, commencing at about sixty, and ending with six hundred, a year. Under the circumstances, to decline the office of Dean of Arts was not quite worldly-wise; but it entailed residence, and Charles Reade had no ambition of stepping into a hornets' nest. Eventually, at the urgent solicitation of his brother William, who promised to come and share his rooms, he reluctantly assented; and Mr. Goldwin Smith, who at that time was a resident undergraduate Demy, has put on record his feelings of astonishment when the College officer responsible for the moral conduct of the students, appeared

on the scene clad in a bright green coat with brass buttons. This habiliment seems to have affected lastingly the professorial mind of Mr. Goldwin Smith, who possibly may still attribute the baptism of his crony, John Conington, under the College pump to the laxity of discipline encouraged by so grievous a decadence from his canons of sartorial propriety. Anyhow during Charles Reade's year of deanery poor John Conington did suffer an involuntary immersion at the hands of the Demies and gentlemen commoners, his offence being that he had endeavoured to launch a debating society within the College walls. Both he and his friend, Mr. Goldwin Smith, took such dire umbrage at this indignity that they migrated to University College. From a purely academical point of view Magdalen sustained thereby an irreparable loss. An offence of that sort, however, would have to be dealt with by the Vice-President, and not by the Dean of Arts, so that the don in the green coat with brass buttons could not fairly be held to blame. Whether these riotous young gentlemen were emboldened by the spectacle of Lincoln or pea-green on the body

of a dean may be open to discussion. Green, we know, is as revolutionary a colour in Ireland as is red in France. At that time of his life, however, Charles Reade was a harmless Tory. He strove to propitiate the Fellows by playing whist in their common-room. He evoked the enthusiasm of the manly undergraduates by his prowess with the willow on Cowley Marsh. He fished the Cherwell with a casting net, and started archery in the grove, and bowls on the lawn. He could not smoke, or imbibe the traditional port, but he gave charming little dinner-parties, at one of which the guests were surprised to find an entire hare placed before each of them, in order, as their host phrased it, that no one should quarrel with his neighbour about the back. He devoured books in the Bodleian, and occasionally would astonish the home circle at Ipsden by dropping in to 8 o'clock breakfast after a seventeen miles walk. He did not enjoy it all, but endured it with the constancy of a martyr, while so far as the common-room went, he escaped any positive friction. Their little sarcasms and sly innuendoes could not penetrate his crust of calm, impassive, unuttering indifference; and in the

end they voted Reade an incomprehensible man, who in their judgment was not quite so negative as they had pre-supposed him to be.

Now comes the oddest incident of this not very eventful year. As Dean of Arts he had a Demyship at his disposal, and alone of all College officers since 1460 A.D., when the first Demies were admitted, positively declined to nominate.

Was this electoral purism? Was it perversity? Was it sheer eccentricity? It may be ascribed to none of these motives, but simply to the circumstance of none of the candidates commending themselves to him. He would not import into the College any one of whose merit, intellectual and social, he did not feel conscientiously assured. That was all.

Nevertheless, he was canvassed. Sir John Chandos Reade, Bart., of Shipton Court, the head of his family, wrote in right royal style to command him to nominate one of his young friends. Then the son of that Mr. Slatter, of Rose Hill, to whom he was indebted for many a weal on his young body, entered as a candidate, and Charles Reade was urged to remember the benefits he had received from diurnal

flagellation, and make a handsome return for the moral elevation resulting therefrom. Unfortunately for the pecuniary interest of the amiable gentlemen thus pressed on the notice of the Dean of Arts, he was not easily to be influenced. He averred that he would neither disregard the mandate of the head of his ancient family, nor prefer another to the son of his whilom flagellant. He should therefore surrender his nomination to President Routh, in whose judgment and impartiality he felt the largest confidence. The common-room opened its mouth wide in wonder at this self-denying ordinance, but most assuredly Charles Reade did not suffer in its estimation; while the advocates of University and College reform upheld him as a model worthy of imitation, and as the initiator of a newer and purer system of election. It is not necessary perhaps to echo this exaggerated encomium. Had a relative, or the son of a friend, chanced to be a candidate, Charles Reade would have duly recognized the claims of consanguinity or sodality. His merit, if merit it was, consisted in declining to nominate merely for the sake of exercising his power of patronage, and above

all he dreaded the responsibility of introducing an unknown quantity into the College. If Magdalen had been gracious to him, he would have responded to her benevolence with enthusiasm. As it was, in lieu of being an *alma mater* she tried to pose as an *injusta noverca*, and at the last, after fifty years of Fellowship, his cry was, "I will never enter their common-room again." But he was jealous for the honour of his College, far more so than the gentry who were content to pick the College purse while they raved about the Founder, and romanced concerning statutes whose spirit they persistently disregarded.

And so, thanks to the fraternal self-sacrifice of brother William, who magnanimously devoted three weeks at a stretch periodically in order to relieve Charles Reade from boredom, the year of deanery was got through. Goldwin Smith took umbrage at the green coat; but with the exception of this superior person, no one quarrelled with a dean who could not sink to the level of a don. Magdalen in those halcyon days was an easy-going, genial, academical club, and in summer really a very charming place of residence; indeed, brother

William ever after spoke of the College as luxurious and most agreeable. A domestic man, he did not relish a prolonged absence from his wife and children; but the hospitality of Magdalen, and the excellence of its *cuisine*, more than reconciled him to occasional spells of *solitude à deux* with his absent and rather silent brother.

This was the last prolonged residence within the College walls, with the exception of his year of Vice-Presidency, that Charles Reade submitted to. The lines of his life were not cast in Oxford, and his visits there were mere episodes.

CHAPTER XI.

PARIS AND GENEVA.

We will now for the nonce dismiss Oxford, and revert to Charles Reade's happier and freer existence apart from the academical corporation with which he possessed so little affinity.

During his vacations as a law student he resolved to see as much of the world as possible. Ipsden was his head-quarters when he was not undergoing the solemn farce of eating his Lincoln's Inn dinners, but he roamed afield, chiefly, however, in his native land and in Scotland. The coaching days were not those of luxurious travelling, but he was a great walker, and some Oxford acquaintances afforded him alike hospitality, introductions, and splendid sport in the highlands. He was a gay, light-hearted youngster at that period, with a fine

taste for dancing hornpipes and reels, and Scotland certainly attracted him not a little. He remembered that his maternal grandmother was the daughter of an officer in the young Pretender's army, and could therefore boast a slight strain of Scotch blood in his otherwise English veins. The Scotch character, moreover, interested him profoundly. He admired its solidity and caution. Hating their whisky, he was charmed by their high courage and splendid truthfulness. What religion he had was essentially Calvinistic, and in his old age, when the strong convictions of youth returned as the tide after the ebb, he preferred the simple Presbyterian form of worship to the ritual of the Church or England. No marvel, therefore, that Scotland drew him towards her, or that the scene of one of his earlier and perhaps most natural essays in the art of dramatic narration should have been laid in Scotland. 'Christie Johnstone' was very much the product of the bright years of his young manhood, though actually penned nearly two decades later. It represented a revival of early impressions, blended with a subsequent experience of the risks and perils of herring fishing. Scotland seems to have

appealed to him strongly, not merely as one devoted to his gun, and to a certain extent an admirer of the picturesque, nor solely because it had been idealized for the youth of his generation with such rare skill by Sir Walter Scott, a master he was taught by his Tory parents, if indeed he needed teaching, to reverence; but equally because he found the Scotch so genuine, a people at once practical and ideal. For Charles Reade, himself the most unpractical and unbusiness-like of all men, a dreamer who at times was actually unconscious of what was passing around him, held practical talent, as a quality beyond his comprehension, in high honour. Of course as a keen observer he was never blind to the weak side of the North British character. 'Christie Johnstone' displays a close analysis of the Scotch habit of thought, so much so that it might have been written by a Scotchman born and bred. Its every line evinces the friendly and admiring critic who had journeyed to North Britain for amusement, and remained to become warmly appreciative. Between the years 1837 and 1847 his visits to the land of cakes were chronic; and when in 1839 his brother William

wedded as his second wife Miss Murray of Ardbennie in Perthshire, Scotland offered a double attraction.

In 1839 his fond mother seems to have provided him with adequate funds for a tour on the continent. The route he travelled has since then become so way-worn as to savour of the trite and commonplace. Everybody now knows Paris, Geneva, and the Rhine by heart. It must be remembered, however, that in 1839 the British tourist was not much abroad. Railways were but commencing even in England. Travellers, therefore, had to submit to the weariful pace of the diligence, and the imminent risk of accidents when that pace happened to be accelerated. Hence a small tour through Western Europe involved fatigue and expense, to such an extent that most men shrank from it, preferring to live at home at ease, and acquire their knowledge of foreign parts from books and newspapers. Fortunately, we possess a fragmental record of this episode in Charles Reade's life from his own pen in the shape of letters sent home. They are the effusions of youth and young Oxford, of a brain that had been saturated with Aristotle,

and trained to view all things human and divine through academic spectacles. Yet they contain flashes of original thought, couched in the language of Readiana, and even at that early age indicating the bent of his mind towards character-drawing. He went abroad not so much to study architecture or stare at pictures as to obtain a new view of men and manners. Those familiar with his works will recognize in them his passion for individuality and detestation of average. He may not have been gifted with the keen eye of Dickens for oddity and eccentricity, but a character devoid of distinctive colouring failed to interest him; and we may perceive in the following correspondence how eagerly he was groping amid strange scenes after fresh types. There is but little to show that at this period of his life he did more than dream of authorship; he may or may not have forecast his future, but anyhow he set to work in workmanlike fashion, probing humanity below the surface, and acquiring a knowledge of character while yet ignorant of the very rudiments of dramatic construction. He shall, however, tell his own tale in his own words.

The envelope wherein the following five letters were sealed bears on the reverse this memorandum:

Four (the number actually was five)
letters from
Charles Reade
to
Papa
and
Mamma
A.D. 1839 Aetatis suae 25.
What brutal ink they are written on!
Sealed up Oct. 18 X60
Whilst writing 2nd Vol.
Cloister and the Hearth.
Scene.
Gerard and the
Dusseldorf Doctor.
D.D.

The first is addressed to his mother at Ipsden House, Wallingford, Berks, England; and apparently, owing to its being insufficiently stamped, the maternal purse was mulcted to the extent of two shillings and tenpence, a

heavy penalty even for the days of the shilling postage. It runs thus:

Bedford Hotel, Rue St. Honoré, Paris.
Wednesday, July 3, 1839.

"My dear Mother,

"I write a few lines to notify my safe arrival at the French capital. I fell in with an acquaintance in London going as far as Paris, and as he speaks French, I was glad to close with the offer of his company. This, however, delayed me longer in town than I liked, and longer than I would have waited had the delay been first announced as a condition of our travelling together. We went down to Southampton by railway and coach, Francis Faber, whom I met in London, having dissuaded me from the long sea trip from London. Railway, forty-six miles; coach road, eighteen.

"On getting into the railway at Vauxhall I found a face opposite to me that made me laugh. Thinks I, I am sure I have laughed at you before. On taxing my memory, I became conscious that it was the ludicrous phiz of a comedian, whom I had seen represent a miserly servant, whom his miserly master had

in a paroxysm of generosity promised a guinea, which in a cooler moment he repented of, but which the other did not fail to extort. Learning from our remarks that we were going abroad, this gentleman set his eyes and tongue agoing, one as fast as the other, and drew a rapid sketch of the tour we ought to make, and the route we ought to pursue. This finished, our rapid vehicle set him down some miles from London, on which he said, 'God bless you!' and made a theatrical *congé*.

"This youth's remarks did not stick as some people's do; however, I remember he said there were no cathedrals abroad so fine as the British, whereupon I pushed him with Milan, Cologne, and Antwerp.

"The sea trip from Southampton to Havre was wearisome. I was squeamish, though not vanquished. We started from Portsmouth at twelve, and reached Havre at half past ten. The harbour of this place, where we landed, is like the locks in a river, so narrow. As soon as ever we ran it, 'Whoop,' says a chap on one bank, ''Oop,' says another on the other, whereby we were given to understand that 'The Monarch,' Captain Forder: passenger,

C. R. L. F. of M. C. (Charles Reade, Lay Fellow of Magdalen College), was not undiscovered by the gens-d'armes, douaniers, and other harpies. One of the former was on board of us the moment the vessel touched the pier, occupied the passage-plank with his body, and took all our passports. Our portmanteaus were in the hold of the vessel *by law*, our bags we were allowed at once to take to the Custom House, where they were cursorily examined by the C. H. officers, as the portmanteaus were diligently searched the next morning at 8 o'clock. Every hotel keeps a chap called a commissionaire, Anglicé a decoy duck, whose business it is to stand on the quay, pounce upon the arrivals before they can recover their scattered senses, announce the immeasurable superiority of his inn, and by way of commentary bustle thither with his victim's luggage. Being prepared for this, we sang out, 'London Hotel,' whereupon all the other ducks fled before a stout, noisy Frenchman, who poured a tide of very tolerable English upon us, and carried us off to the London Hotel. We slept in the middle of the house, yet up three pairs of stairs—bricked

floor of course. Monsieur le Commissionaire rose with the sun, and secured us places in the diligence. The *coupé* being engaged, we took the *banquette*, an open place like a cab at the top of all, where the conductor or guard sits with three passengers, the coachman sitting in a great seat bang overright the wheel horse's shoulders.

"Havre is a very fine town. There is a lofty hill a little way out fairly studded with houses. On that hill live one hundred and fifty English families. Our commissionaire bustled about, got our passports, showed us the town, bolted into the great Church, jabbered so loud as quite to drown the priests' gabbling, and exit sprinkling himself with some of the Holy Water. Paris, and our route thither, which was magnificent in point of scenery, is for another letter, better ink, paper, pens, etc. I beg to assure you of my safety, and the pleasure I have already derived from my trip.

"Your affectionate Son,

"CHARLES."

One would like to frame a guess as to who the companion of his travel was, and further, as

to the identity of the comedian with the mirth-provoking visage. He has left no clue to either. Had the former been an Oxonian his name would doubtless have appeared, while as regards the latter, the theatre being anathema at Ipsden, one feels rather surprised that a comedian was alluded to even incidentally, and still more that this was followed up by an avowal of having seen him play. Perhaps Mrs. Reade may have frowned and ejaculated impatiently when she read that portion aloud to the family circle. But we may rest assured this little *lapsus calami* about the theatre was more than amply atoned for by the sly hit at the priest in the great church of Havre. Uncle Faber, from his splendid solitude at Sherburn Hospital, had predicted the downfall of the Papacy, the wish in his case being father to the thought, and his sister-in-law of Ipsden firmly believed the good man to be one of the major prophets. Son Charles knew that nothing was so likely to charm his mother as a hard hit at anybody, or anything, papistical. Hence the allusion to priestly jabber may be taken *cum grano* as a bit of diplomacy.

It seems strange that Paris, for which city

he subsequently conceived such a strong affection, should not by any means have taken him captive at first sight. Eight years later, indeed up to the date of the Revolution of 1848, which fairly nauseated him, he idolized Paris, and seemed when absent beset with a restless desire to revisit it. Paris appears to have grown upon him, but not until he had perfected himself in colloquial French, and was able to sit out a French play without the aid of a dictionary.

His first impressions of the gayest of gay cities may be gathered from the following letter, evidently penned with great care. Mrs. Reade was one of those domestic deities that require much propitiation, and her favourite son had the best reasons for desiring to keep in her good graces. *Vide* the postscript.

Hotel Bedford,
Tuesday, July 9.

"My dear Mother,

"I have received through Lady Steele one letter from you. By the time this reaches you I shall be D. V. in Geneva, and in possession of any other you may have sent there. My last letter left me at Havre, where

we slept, and were flea-bitten. On perambulating the town in the morning (this being, you are to know, the first foreign town I had ever seen) I began to look out for the points of difference. The houses have an entirely different appearance, but in what the difference lies it would not be easy to define; however, they are higher, the windows open like folding doors, and have generally green blinds. They are also all old, and this is the case in every part of France I have seen. Nothing appears to have been built within the last two centuries. The streets crowded with people, who wear blue blouses pretty generally.

"We left Havre at eleven o'clock in the morning, and as we were occupied some time at the Custom House, had not much time to make observations. The *coupé* being taken, we had the *banquette*. The first thing I discovered was, that in France carriages take the right hand in passing. We had a fresh coachman every stage, who drove horses just as Englishmen drive pigs, let the reins fall upon their backs, and laid the whip into them in forty different ways. The whip is everything with these fellows. It is never idle, always

either cracking in the air or stinging the cattle. We drove out of Havre with five horses, two behind, three in front—a very common number. The wheels of the diligence were two-thirds as broad as those of an English broad-wheeled waggon, but we rolled along at a good pace over a finer road than any in Oxfordshire, or in fact any that ever I saw except the Great North Road. We had no reason to regret not having taken the boat to Rouen, since the turnpike presents the finer view of the two. The Seine is a magnificent river, and its beauties are seen from the road, which never separates long from it, infinitely better than they can be from the river. The way in which the river first bursts upon your sight, as you wheel round a corner to descend a hill that has taken you an hour to mount, is prodigiously fine. Another view I particularly remarked. We had lost sight of the river some time, and entered a very woody country. We were ascending a mountain in a very serpentine manner, when at a turn of the road we saw at one moment a huge basin of wooded hills, before, behind, and on the left; on the right, far below two gigantic branches of the

Seine rolling through such a plain!—grass, corn, groves of apple-trees, towns, villages, chateaux, steam-boats, and large merchant vessels on the river, the air perfumed with the apple-trees on the side of the roads. Rouen is first seen from a high hill. Edinburgh is *not to be compared to it!* The audacious sweep of the river, the mountains behind the town, the town itself, as picturesque an object as either the mountain or the river, as if nature had planted it to give the scene the magnificent cathedral, worth a thousand Nôtre Dames! Oh, my eye!

"We were annoyed with no *pavé* between Havre and Paris except before entering a town, when you have generally half a mile of it; but I hear we shall travel a great deal on *pavé* between Paris and Switzerland. The towns are far more frequent than in England. Chateaux, I did not see many; the finest belonged to a ribbon-merchant, so trade flourishes over here, I suppose. At Rouen they put us into the *coupé* without extra charge, and mounted some snobs in the *banquette*. The diligence drivers flanked all their acquaintances they met on the road, making the leather thong crack

about six inches from their skulls. However, it sometimes happened that these foot-passengers touched their hats to the driver (touching the hat in France is no more than nodding or winking in England), in which case he always shifted his other instrument of recognition to his left hand, and drawing off his cap bowed with graceful, respectful *empressement.*

"We had one nice scene after Rouen. The sun had just set, when in the middle of a tremendous hill from which Rouen (at a great distance) was visible, we, having eight horses, caught the Dieppe diligence with but five. The Dieppe people got out; incited by their example we did the same. The road lay through a wood. Thirty or forty people walking by the side of the two enormous machines, some smoking, others lighting their pipes, all chatting, polite, and agreeable, produced a pleasant effect. At the top of the hill our humanity was rewarded by a fine retrospect. We raced the Dieppe all the way to Paris, beat them when about three miles from P.; but as we clapped on a handsome set of horses two miles from the city just to make a show, our old friend rolled by, the driver indulging in

pantomimic gestures that ended in a flank all round for his beasts. On reaching Paris I went into a warm bath, for which I paid four francs and a half. A knowing man in the inn told me he gets his at the same place for one franc six sous; the fact is, you must ask for a simple bath, value one franc. I had a complete one, viz. one covered with a piece of linen, price one franc and a half, which adds nothing to your comfort. Take your own soap. I took what the man offered me, for which I was charged thirty sous, at which preposterous price it is actually sold in the shops. To be sure such delicious soap never found its way to England; it melts like a peach, and smells like nectar. I mean to bring you a cake.

"Mr. Lane, the clerk of the hotel, speaks French and English with equal fluency. I begged him to learn at the *poste restante* where Miss Reade was. They refused to give him any information, and I hear this is their common practice. Mr. Lane got me my Swiss passport, and has been negociating for a place in the diligence; but to my horror, just as I had packed up everything, word came that the

diligence was full till Friday, when a place in the *banquette* or *interieure* was left! The *coupé* taken for nineteen days except one place on Saturday! So here I am booked for three days more in Paris, of which I am heartily tired. I have dined twice with Lady Steele, and since this *contretemps* have accepted another invitation. I have been once at the theatre to see the famous Mdlle. Mars, who at the age of seventy years enacts pretty girls of seventeen. Such, however, was not the case this time. She represented Mdlle. de Belle Isle, a lady of rank and misfortune, who comes to Paris to throw herself at the king's feet on behalf of her father and brother in the Bastille. Here, as her suit had just begun to prosper, a singular concatenation of circumstances brings her virtue under suspicion, and every attempt she makes to clear up the mystery serves by a fatality to make matters worse. The scenes between her and her chivalrous lover, the Chevalier Detubigny, were very striking. At length, in defiance of what appears to him the evidence of his senses, he undertakes the defence of her honour. Then follows a scene in which he bids her farewell on the eve of a

desperate duel he has undertaken, unknown of course to her. This was so well written and finely acted, that although I followed the players with a book, the sentences of which I had partly learned by help of a dictionary, I sniffed a little, and was very near yelping right out. I shall never forget how the dog said those three words, 'Je pars, Gabrielle!'

"'Breathes there a man with soul so dead!' I shall be very glad to return home, as soon as ever I have seen the principal beauties of Switzerland. I have picked up one or more little traits of character, national and industrial, but not so many as I could have wished. Of the public buildings in '*avis*,' I will only say at present, they are so magnificent and numerous, that after the first two days the mind is no longer capable of surprise or much gratified by anything in that way I could gaze at. The picture-gallery of the Louvre is an *avenue*, a long walk for robust persons. Nôtre Dame is a humbug, unworthy to be the cathedral of Paris. Versailles I have seen, but could not gain admission. Before I leave Paris, since I am to be detained here, I think I might as well write the letter I promised my father,

in which I will mention one or two of the things I have seen and observed in Paris. In the mean time, love to all.

"Your affectionate Son,

"CHARLES READE.

"P.S.—In answer to something in your letter, I have not spent one farthing of your money in knick-knackeries, and I will not spend above one napoleon so during all my tour.

"Foi de Chevalier!"

The postscript is very tell-tale. Mrs. Reade, who styled her husband "Mr. Reade" when the clouds chanced to have collected on her brow, and "my dearest John" when the sun shone, was in her way a domestic tyrant. In the twenties of his life son Charles was no match for her, and we may read their mutual relations in the deferential tone adopted by him when referring to the delicate subject of money.

The letter to his father, if ever written, is not exstant. Of the series, preserved apparently by his fond mother, the next in chronological order is addressed to his brother William from Geneva. What is now styled the Grand

Hôtel des Bergues, in 1839 had not plastered itself with a grandiloquent epithet, grandeur being apparently the product of railways. It was tenanted at the time by one Herr A. E. Rufenacht, and the note-paper placed at the disposal of its guests was headed with a vignette representing with average accuracy the section of the northern side of Geneva towards the lake, including, of course, the "Bergues" itself.

"My dear William," he writes, "The above is A. E. Rufenacht's notion of Geneva, viz. the place upon the borders of whose lake stands the inn that calls him its master. All the beauties of this noble place lie on that side of the lake which for certain reasons escaped our *maître-d'hôtel's* picturesque investigation. In point of fact, Geneva is not the dirty hole he has represented it. On his side of the lake are some very high hills, to which his vignette does no justice; on the other side, at different distances from the water-side, are the famous mountains of Switzerland. A. the town, mostly situate on steep rising ground. B. C. mountains rising direct from a thick fringe of trees,

spotted with a few Swiss houses *ornées*, on the very brink of the water. E. a mountain lying a little back. F. G. others a long distance down the lake. J. long, straggling, hundred-peak Mont Blanc. X. a mountain overlooking the highest part of the town. O. the two deep, narrow streams in which the lake is made to rush through the town. Mont Blanc is so distant that (other mountains being close) its vast height reaches the mind only in the form of an obvious inference, *i. e.* you can see no part of Mont Blanc that is not either covered or sprinkled with snow, but the fine eminences (not less, I imagine, than 5000 feet) near at hand are clothed with vines to their very summits. I loitered about by the side of the blue waters last night, and asked myself whether it was possible I could be personally present at this famous city; yet I am sure my arrival hither was not contrived with that magical celerity which naturally dazzles the senses, and might excuse a person for fancying that nothing is but what is not. Sir, I left Paris at 5 p.m. Saturday, and arrived here Tuesday 6 p.m., seventy-seven hours, during which time I never left the diligence, except at

the ordinary stoppages, and twice every twenty-four hours for breakfast and dinner, the only meals allowed to travellers in French coaches. After being out of bed three nights, and encountering dust and heat unknown in Britain, I went to rest at my usual hour, and got up to breakfast at nine without the slightest feeling of fatigue. With regard to the heat in the South of France and here, I need only say that I rode in the diligence without my coat and neckcloth, and sleep without one blanket, and the windows, as wide as folding-doors, wide open.

"Paris. I arrived there at seven in the morning, after twenty-one hours of the best diligence in France, went to Lawson's English hotel, 323, Rue St. Honoré. Bath, breakfast, etc. It is so impossible to convey in a letter any idea of grand public buildings that I shall reserve them for colloquy, and confine myself to other matters of observation. I soon discovered that the French understand pleasure better than we, and they pursue it steadily, not boisterously nor laboriously, into which contrary extreme the English are apt to fall, but with a graceful yet matter-of-course air. The

most dissipated keep what in London would be thought very early hours; but their evening pleasures commence early, and they are free from that stark, staring, national madness which induces us to sit sipping wine three consecutive hours. Talk of the population of London, it appears nothing compared with that of Paris to the eye of a walker; at the same moment the Boulevards at every part, the Tuileries gardens, all the places of public amusement, and all the streets are so crowded you can hardly see the ground: this is in the evening. The *cafés*, which are extremely numerous, have often large awnings erected outside them, under which some fifty chairs are set. The visitants in fine weather sit here and sip their coffee, or eat their ices in a delightful shade. One very cheap amusement is Musard's concert—one franc. The music, which is all instrumental, is executed in magnificent style; the musicians play in a large building, roofed, but opened on the side facing the gardens, between which and the said building nothing intervenes but a few pillars. In the building and outside hundreds of seats are placed, hundreds of persons walk during the performance in the

gardens and orange grove, from which the music is heard to advantage, a noble *café* adjoining. The building and gardens blaze with lamps, and the former with gold and silver columns. Calino's concert is conducted on a similar plan, but here in the garden is an amphitheatre, where chaps ride with a spear at the ring, so much a turn. Of course I have been all along on the look-out for little traits of character, national and individual, but with no very brilliant success. However, at Nôtre Dame I saw two French ladies encounter each other at the door of the confessional. Instantly they both recoiled, curtsied *à la mode*, and insisted A that B, B that A, should have the precedence. One would have thought they were stepping into the *salle-à-manger*. At length one, with a deep expression of gratitude and affability, consented to go and confess her sins first.

"Government, which interferes with everything in France, kills all the meat for the Parisian tables. There are in Paris four thundering slaughter-houses, something in the style of an English Royal Palace. One of these I visited, and having to cross a moderate-

sized river of blood and filth, I showed signs of aversion, whereon my French conductor grinned from ear to ear and said: 'Monsieur, ce n'est pas propre!'

"Again in the Royal forest of Versailles I found a haycock, a solitary haycock. This is for the Frenchmen to jump over and upon, *pour s'amuser*. The forest is full of people every evening, amusing themselves with conversation, soft balls, and dancing. I went one evening to see the lower classes dance, having heard so much of their grace, etc., but was rather disappointed. One or two of the men danced nicely, but they were some of the *jeune gens* from Paris. There were only two aristocratic housemaids, whereof one lolloped, the other spat. The ladies are so very ill-made in France, that of course they cannot dance so well as English women *with one half of their immense practice* could do.

"My attempts at speaking French are said by those who delight in remote analogies to resemble the convulsive efforts of a chimney-sweeper to swarm up a fresh-soaped pole to that joint of mutton which he shall never attain. At the bath last night I asked for a

comb; they nodded assent, and brought an egg! I once soared in conversation as high as what Aristotle calls a gnome, *i. e.* a sort of moral maxim sententiously expressed: * *e. g.* A cab-driver was working his machine over the stones to take me to a neighbouring village, and kept whipping his beast. Says I, "Ne fatiguez pas votre cheval. *Les chevaux sont les bons serviteurs de l'homme.*' 'Bon,' says the Frenchman with a look of intense admiration, his eyes glistening, and (as they invariably do when anything bright strikes their minds from within or without) took his horse a flank that sounded like the crack of a pistol. A delicious effect was produced in the coffee-room at Lawson's hotel by the unexpected intersertion of one word into what promised to be a romantic observation. An Englishman said, 'The tomb of Eloïse and Abelard in the cemetery of Père la Chaise is choked up with weeds and dirt. It's a sad pity their tomb should go to decay in this manner, the *parties* (*quelle horreur!*) having made such a noise in the world.'

* He highly recommends the dramatic poet to season his verse with a judicious interspersion of these.—C. R.

"I went to the Morgue twice. There was a corpse there each time. The first had no marks, the second a number of little cuts round the left breast. If you walk over the Parisian bridges at night, they pitch you over into the Seine, fish you up, and, bringing you to the Morgue, obtain from Government 5 francs for finding what was, properly speaking, never lost. There are fifty thousand soldiers in Paris. All the streets are guarded with military, besides the gens-d'armes, but the bridges are not. If you must cross a bridge at night, you ask for a couple of soldiers—one won't come, because he must return alone. They escort you over, and receive from you four or five francs. There was a small row in Paris just before I came away, which detained my washerwoman from me an hour or two. I can't say what was done. If fifty or a hundred citizens were killed, a Parisian, male or female, would call it a trifling affair.

"Ashamed am I, O Bill, to send such a poor letter as this to England; but I must this day ascend the hill that overlooks Geneva, and am anxious to let you all know where I am, and what are my plans, without delay.

To-morrow I steam down the lake, visit Lausanne, with other places, and get across to Chamounix. I have Nellie's map and a guide book, and money enough to buy the costume necessary for the hills and tour for a week before I return to Geneva, in doing which I shall touch at places on the lake omitted purposely in going. By that time I expect to find a remittance which will enable me to go by diligence to Lucerne. Then I shall ascend the Righi, descend it on the other side, get to Basle, and sail to Rotterdam, stopping at places on the Rhine or not, as may happen. I wish I had you with me. One requires sympathy to season the very finest dish Nature can dress for us. Best love to all at home.

"Your affectionate Brother,

"CHARLES READE.

"P.S.—I wrote from Dijon to my mother to ask for some money. If she will send me a Bank of England note, just taking the number, and address Poste Restante, or Hotel des Bergues, there is no chance of its miscarrying. I shall obtain in Geneva its full value in French money, which is current everywhere,

whereas the Genevese coin is rejected in parts of Switzerland."

The above affords a fair idea of the writer's mental attitude at that period of his life. Addressed to a brother who had been first the naughty boy of the family, then sailor, next soldier, and subsequently a man of leisure enjoying the income of an eldest son, it was penned with a trifle less of constraint than those to his father and mother, yet in the full consciousness of its affording pabulum for the Ipsden breakfast table. Of all men Charles Reade throughout his life was most unwilling to report himself, or detail his every word and action. It is not too much to affirm that he preferred to shroud himself in a thin veil of mystery. This tour, however, was evidently undertaken on the pre-existent arrangement, that he was to narrate at all events the outline of his journey. Doubtless the route had been chalked out with his sister Nellie (Ellinor), who was much attracted by the continent. Hence the passing allusion to her map as to a pole-star.

This and the other letters of the series would

be commonplace but for the indications they afford of the gradual evolution of literary capacity. He wrote as he conversed, sententiously, and with due regard to Aristotle's canon. It must be remembered, however, that *malgré* his mild philosophizing, he was then a bright and sprightly young man, brimful of vigour, a pedestrian and an athlete. It was on his return from this very self-same tour that the writer of these lines saw him jump on the Ipsden dining-room table, an oval board with many legs, and, fiddle in hand, strike up a merry tune and dance the double shuffle. Although a Fellow of Magdalen he was almost a boy, indeed, it took him many years to don the gravity of manhood. He thought epigrammatically, and though he had not yet begun to write his thoughts as he thought them, his speech was invariably not merely pointed, but barbed. His letters are of value to his friends as giving a clue to the steady progress of his mind towards literature, and especially towards the drama, the pole to which his whole being seemed at all times and in all places to turn.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOSPICE OF ST. BERNARD.

THE next epistle of the series is addressed to his father, and contains more of the Charles Reade of later days. It is penned in a freer vein than the solemn essay he indited on entering as a law student, but there are still ample evidences of a desire to gain his father's appreciation. He was writing to a man who enjoyed the reputation in his own county of being an admirable *raconteur*, a ready wit, and as quick at repartee as he was gentle in his sarcasm. He knew the old Squire as a keen observer of human nature, and as possessing that practical talent which he himself lacked. In writing to his fond, exacting mother he was always in leading-strings; in addressing his brother he dropped to mere colloquy; but when attempting description for the perusal of

his father he was put on his mettle. Hence in this effusion, crude as it is, and barely suggesting the future author, we detect more of decided literary effort, and indeed a forecast of some of his best work, such, for example, as the scenes in 'The Cloister and the Hearth,' where he contrasts the mind of the Church with that of the World. But here, as in all his earlier letters, there is noticeable none of that magnificent polish, still less the crystallization of ideas, which was the characteristic of his style as an author. He had not as yet begun to school his pen, and was wont in after years to ridicule the diffuseness which he subsequently laboured to correct. We see here none the less the quick eye for effects, the clear diagnosis of men's minds, and the love of epigram, which was one of his distinguishing traits through life. All, it will be remarked, is in embryo, and at times shapeless and commonplace, *disjecta membra*, requiring collocation and concentration. A biography, however, must necessarily be a record of development, and for this reason we give the less matured as leading up by degrees to the best of our author. The letter opens with lines quoted from memory,

as is evidenced by an erasure. We give it, as the rest of this series, word for word:

"'Seven weary uphill leagues we sped
The setting sun to see,
Sullen and grim he sank to rest,
Sullen and grim sank we;
Six sleepless hours of night we passed
The rising sun to see,
Sullen and grim he rose at last,
Sullen and grim rose we.'
Milton, 'Pr. R.' 1st Book.

"*Hotel de la Tour, Martigny.*
Wednesday.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I write to you in the middle of a pedestrian tour. On Friday afternoon last I walked from Geneva, knapsack on my back, to Bonneville—eighteen miles; the next day to Cluses and Sallanches, *char* to Chamounix. From Chamounix, the next day, I walked to Montanvert, and hopped about with a pole on the Mer de Glace; the next day from Chamounix, whither one is forced to return from Montanvert. I walked and rode upon a chance mule to Martigny, from Martigny next day to Orsieres, thence walked the grand route to L'Hospice de St. Bernard, from thence to the Col de Ferry, Orsieres, and so to

Martigny. In the course of the excursion I have supped full of the terrible and sublime, and am now no more excited by entering a gloomy gorge, with great masses of rock bulging out from the top of great soaring mountains over my head, than you are when Green Hill happens to burst upon your view, as you destine to destruction the hereditary beeches. I have been unfortunate with Mont Blanc. Although nobody knows so well when the sun is out of bed as he, he wore his night-cap all the time I was at Chamounix, and when I got to the other side of him, he appeared no higher than his neighbours. The fact was, he was the most distant of them all, and the ground, or rather snow, I trod upon was seven thousand six hundred and forty feet above the level of the sea.

"The Aiguilles, as they are called, that shoot up nearly under the traveller's nose, when he is at the top of the little hill, Montanvert, tower perpendicularly like a spear's head. The light fleecy clouds of a fine day sail across their necks, but their points and heads peer out above everything, so lofty and so near, that, like high buildings, they appear as you look at them to be moving slowly along the sky. I care

little how high above some sea a hundred leagues off any given hill is known by calculation to be; the mountain that rises highest above the level of my eyes as I look at it pleases them most.

"You have heard and read and seen pictures of the dogs of St. Bernard, how they pick a dead man out of the snow, bark three times, lick him dry, cut back to the convent (*sic*), ring the bell, nab the porter as soon as he appears, and draw him by the coat-tails to the place, and whine till the poor man is brought to life again with blankets and spirits in the kitchen; at other times, when they think it looks likely to snow, how they turn out with a bottle of cognac round their necks, throw themselves, as if by merest accident, in a traveller's way, refresh him, and slily conduct him to the monastery.

"Such tales I of yore amused myself with, but as soon as I had finally fixed on my profession, it occurred to me that I must make up my mind to conjugate the verb 'humbug' in the active voice alone. As I ascended to St. Bernard I said to myself, 'What do these dogs really do?' Why, they are taken out by a servant, and when they find a body, they scratch,

as every other dog omits no opportunity of doing. One of the monks, in answer to the question I put, told me the dogs *never went out alone;* however, I must tell you, that when they find themselves in the immediate vicinity of a body they set up a loud bark, which brings the accompanying servant to the spot. So that others have flattered, and I done justice to the animals.

"I must tell you something about my visit to the hospice. I started from Martigny with a *char-à-banc* mule and guide, detached the mule from the *char* at Sulde, a village half-way, and rode him to the hospice. On my arrival I was shown by a monk into the *salle-à-manger*, where were five strangers, who rose on my entrance, and as we sat down to dinner immediately, I have no doubt I had been descried from a distance and waited for. The dinner, unlike any other in this country, consisted of a succession of single dishes, each carved by a monk, for I must tell you that, as there were two ladies in the company, the monks could not, by their rules, dine with us, as otherwise they would, but were represented by one of their number. First, soup; second, fritters, *beignets de pommes*, as they call them;

third, stewed beef; fourth, roast veal; fifth, cheese and nuts, which made a contemporaneous appearance. Our monk was young, well-bred, and well-mannered. He wore the dress of his order—a black fool's-cap, with a round tassel at top, a coarse black robe belted round the waist, a vest buttoned up to the throat with pretty little round convex buttons planted half an inch apart, a military stock made of little beads—a piece of white tape curled round his neck, and, descending his breast, was lost to sight; at the end of this no doubt hung some religious toy or other. I caught (though you may be sure I was all ears) nothing of the conversation but this: he told us that a military man, a friend of the superior, having seen through the world, and imbibed a thorough distaste for it, obtained a vacant place among the *confrères* of St. Bernard. His boxes, five or six in number, were sent up, and the next afternoon he came. 'Much cooler here than in the valley,' says he. 'Oui, monsieur, ici l'air est toujours vif,' responded a monk. The next morning at breakfast there was a palpable fog, or rather — which of course, from its height, is an every-day occurrence—St. Bernard

was deep in the clouds. The soldier, tired of war's alarms, conversed a little, eat much, and meditated more. At noon the sentinel saw a figure wrapped in a military cloak descending the hill with rapid strides, and a note left in the refectory hoped the brethren would not put themselves to inconvenience with the baggage, as its removal from St. Bernard's was an affair of secondary importance, and did not call for despatch.

"The wine here is delicious. For this I had been prepared by my guide, who, when I asked him if the holy brethren drank wine, responded exactly thus: 'Oui, oui, et du bon vin! He! he! et du bon vin! et du bon vin, he! he! he! et du bon vin, he! he! he! he!' If no sign of mortification appears in the stomachs and faces of the monks of St. Bernard, it is nevertheless true that they devote themselves to a deadly climate for the benefit of their fellow-creatures; four young monks out of their small number were lying dead not long ago. In winter of course it is cruelly cold; in summer it is best described by the epithet (spelt aright) I have put above into a reverend gentleman's mouth. However, take an instance:

there is a little building adjoins the convent (*sic*) used as a morgue. Into this all travellers found dead and unowned are put for the purpose of recognition. Here, such is the nature of the air of St. Bernard, they remain for three years in such a state that their friends would recognize them. The features and character of the face remain, and the whole carcase turns into 'bones and leather,' without decomposing. These things I saw within two yards of me, but seeing is not believing; my mind could not realize the thing, and I was no more horrified by the sight than by Burns's description of such things in 'Tam O'Shanter,' though the reality in point of fact leaves the fiction far behind. The monks have a harrowing plan of putting the poor creatures in the morgue into the attitude in which they were found dead in the snow, which of course enhances the ghastly effect. I have a distinct remembrance of one man who stands opposite the window, his arms folded over his stomach, with as *dégagée* an air as if he could step over the way and shake hands with you in a moment: but I am thankful he does not haunt me in my dreams, as perhaps he would some persons.

"After dinner the monk left us. We chatted, I with a German who spoke English, and went to bed. At half-past six in the morning a single knock, heavy and deep like an Oxford dun, and in came through the half-open door the black fool's-cap; it remained a moment, and exit. 'That means I'm to get up,' said I, and up I got. As I was dressing I heard the organ peal at a little distance with fine effect. When I came down the house was clear. All my fellow-voyagers were off. I drank three cups of coffee, and then the monk of yesterday came to show me the place. I was puzzled how to pay him, for you must know that the society is not so rich as it was, and it is the thing for all who can afford it to pay as much as they would at an inn, but no compulsion. However, I watched my opportunity, which soon occurred. The monk was showing me the chapel; I discovered at a distance the 'tronc des aumones.' On this I got my two five-franc pieces in my hand, and as we passed the box, slipped them in with a nothing-at-all sort of air. This, I was afterwards informed, is the *comme il faut* method of doing the thing. I did not buy at Martigny

a St. Bernard puppy, because I was *not sure* how you and the mamma would receive it, and *was sure* that I must give a good deal of money for it, without the positive certainty of getting the genuine breed—the puppies at the hospital were all disposed of. As we were going my guide came up to the monk and made a remark, on which the monk patted him on the back, said, 'Ah, coquin!' and taking him by the ear, twisted him round a bit, and gave me to understand (I always use this phrase when I report a Frenchman or a Swiss—it is a safe one) that the fellow wanted to pass for a wit.

"My journey has so far interrupted my pen that I must sign this letter Friday, Geneva. In a day or two I hope to be on my way to Thun and Lucerne. Mr. N— is in my hotel, looking as stiff, awkward, and conceited as ever. He the living representative of T—! *Ma foi!* A worn-out linen-draper's yard-measure covered with a little worn-out manufactured lace, a miserable mixture of crooked stiffness and graceless frivolity. But I beg pardon. He is a neighbour of yours, and a friend of the Blackstones. Peace be with him, and may he never, by inserting his great stolid coun-

tenance in a room where I am at breakfast, provoke me to abuse him, pens, ink, and paper, and your attention prepared for better topics. You see I attempt no laboured description of mountains. It is impossible. Poets and painters fail to give an adequate or distinct idea of them. That can only be gained by seeing them. The finest mountains I have seen are the Mauvaise Langue, the Dent du Midi, another hill whose name I forget, but 9000 feet high, and covered with shining ice for a mile at the top, the Aiguilles about Montanvert, and Mont Blanc, from a spot ten miles west of Chamounix, where I confess he looked among his neighbours *qualis inter viburna cupressus*. I shall write soon to my mother, and would of course have written before, but that a traveller's letters are public property in a family, unless indeed he records the sayings and doings of Frenchwomen, in which case they would be as well confined to the perusal of members of the foul sex in England

"Your affectionate Son,

"CHARLES.

"P. S.—If in consequence of my description you come to Switzerland before I return, do

not forget to ask at all the inns in the mountains for Chamois cutlets!"

It was a strange coincidence that some forty years after this visit to the Hospice of St. Bernard was penned, a cousin of the writer, himself a retired officer, should have donned the monkish cowl, and though he did not change his mind quite so rapidly as the soldier tired of war's alarms, who found the atmosphere of the Alps unpleasantly *vif*, notwithstanding was led to discover that monasticism was not his vocation. The cloister, even the Magdalen cloister, with its Epicurean rule, was never to the taste of our author. From its inception he held the mediævalism of his uncle's nephew, Frederick Faber, in as hearty contempt as Carlyle's earnestness. In 1839, moreover, the ordinary English gentleman knew less than nothing concerning the Roman organization, and although now-a-days, to confuse convent with monastery, or to use each word indiscriminately, would argue crass ignorance, at that period it was considered virile to ignore the Roman Church as an effete superstition, awaiting a final *coup de grâce*.

George Stanley Faber always spoke of Rome with rude contempt, and his authority was reverenced at Ipsden as being infallible.

The last letter of the series unfortunately was torn in the opening, so it contains a few unimportant ellipses. It is written in a vein of humour indicative of high spirits, and literally teems with euphuism. Surely never was there a more light-hearted, merry, free-handed young gentleman? In his later years, when life had become well nigh a burden, and the wild cry arose from lips satiated with success, "Give me back my youth!" his mind reverted in bitter contrast to this golden span of his splendid manhood. Those who knew him, moreover, only after a long acquaintance with the world had superinduced a habit of viewing every one, even his nearest and dearest, with an eye of suspicion, could hardly have imagined how *debonnaire* and simple his natural disposition was. His letter shall give a likeness in miniature of what he was. As thus:

Berne-Mercredi, Quatorze.

"My dear Mother,

"Amidst mountains and valleys though we may roam, be it ever so level,

there's no place like home. Thitherward my face is at length turned, and I think you may expect me, if nothing cross should happen, in less than a week after receipt of this. I waited more than a week for Mr. Baring's frank at Geneva; it never came, and never will come. However, I have given the Post at Geneva instructions to forward it to Basle, where I hope to be in two days, and whither I sent my luggage from Geneva *par voulage.* I was *au désespoir,* when most unexpectedly some money arrived from Oxford. On this, as I had written to you to send me some to Cologne, I thought I could not do better than leave Geneva, where I was wasting time and money most horribly. I made my little tour through the Oberland, and if I find the money at Cologne, I shall come bravely into port after visiting both Brussels and Antwerp. Mr. Baring's frank I have given up; however, I shall of course leave my direction on paper at the Post-office, Basle, as I did at Geneva, and perhaps about the fall of the leaf the money you so kindly devoted to the least deserving member will flow gently back by some devious channel into the bosom of our family at Ipsden.

"How few people ever dream of thinking for themselves, even in matters of taste, although every language possesses a proverb that hints at the propriety of so doing. Chamounix, the great lion of tourists, is no more to be compared to the Oberland than chalk to sardonix. I grant that in Savoy one gloomy gorge succeeds to another, wherever you go, in a surprising manner; but there is no contrast, without which all pictures are deficient, and without which all scenes soon become distasteful. Now the Oberland in the first place beats Savoy out of the field with its own weapons. The Jungfrau, Wetterhorn, Silberhorn, &c. being infinitely *grander* than Mont Blanc, which is a great sloping hill that never looks high, because when you are close under it the top is fifteen miles from you, whereas the mountains I have mentioned rise perpendicularly 13,000 feet from the very green valley you walk upon, nothing but stone, ice, and everlasting snow. Oh! the walk over the Brunnig to Meyringen, the first fifteen miles nothing but rock, the last fifteen a broad valley between low hills, bright green from top to bottom, watered with rivulets, and studded with thirty

thousand châlets, or picturesque little cow-houses. Then from Muhlinen by the Thuner See, Interlaken, etc., over the Wenghen Alp to the hotel at the foot of the Jungfrau. In this walk the contrast was inverted, and we passed through the relics of the rich valley of Frutigen, walked through groves of walnut trees, by the side of a lake bluer than the sky. I saw the Staubach waterfall fall like a horse's tail three hundred and twenty-six feet before it touched the ground. * * * * * * 'Aujourdhui nous avons vues les arbres et les fruits, et au présent nous—présent tense, les glaciers éternelles!' said my guide as we stopped right opposite the Jungfrau at the door of the Auberge, and at that moment a *ranz des vaches*, sung in full harmony by some Swiss girls, stole over the Wenghen Alp behind us, and made me feel as if I was that moment changed for the first time from a vegetable to an angel. The walks from the Jungfrau to Grindelwald, and from thence to Meyringen—there you have the contrast of juxtaposition, as before of succession, so to speak: frowning crags on the one side, laughing lawns on the other, all the way. The road lies over grass,

and every now and then you pass from the bright hot sun into a pine-grove, dark as a cavern and cool as a grotto, to emerge, perhaps, when a new mountain may be ready to stare at you here and a new green to smile on you there.

"I have ascended the Righi and the Rothorn, which is much higher; but the most wonderful scenes are not, in fact, the most thrillingly delightful. I walked from Lucerne to the top of the Righi in four hours and a quarter, in order to win a wager proposed by a Swiss that I could not possibly do it under five hours. The town is eight miles from the bottom of the hill. I am always tired and blown for the first two or three miles in mounting a hill, but get fresher and fresher the further I advance. Coming down kills me, *il faut avouer!* However, I think with this training I shall be able to walk against the old mule in September. Who shoots? I have seen one brood of a kind of ptarmigan, and two dead chamois, that is all, in all my excursion. You didn't say where William thinks of going if he leaves Ipsden in November. The habitable globe possesses no more

delightful spot than Crieff on a fine day, or rather the hill between Crieff and Menzies. When I meet a woman on the road I draw off my tile, and utter sounds to this effect—'Guy-ten dacq yung fr——!' This is looked for. If you don't do it you are set down as *un bête Anglais.* I fall easily into the manners of the different nations I pass through, and *find myself invariably the originator of the conversation, whether my neighbour be French, German, or Italian, or English.* I find the foreigners as shy of beginning with us every bit as we are with them. This is not a methodical letter. When I return I will go over my route with you by the aid of Nellie's map, and point out where I eat and slept. I will show you the scene of any little incident I may have witnessed, and intersperse all with agreeable reflections such as are calculated to combine amusement with instruction. Minds of the higher order will generalize. Have you mentioned in Mr. Baring's letter whether the game is likely to be plentiful this year? Probably not. I wonder what made *me* think of such a matter—so trivial! I am very glad Mr. Blake consents to my visiting his office, and I hope I

shall have strength of mind and body to mount a little henceforth in the social world as I have been lately doing in the physical.

"Love to all.

"Your affectionate Son,

"CHARLES READE.

"P.S.—You do not say whether our little Austrian has come back. I packed up two Swiss songs for her; whether they are either good or new is a glorious uncertainty, because, though I can't read music, I have got eyes, so selected my 'chansons' according to the execution of the vignettes on their backs. Also a shoe-horn made of a chamois' horn. * * * * * * one or two souvenirs of different places. *Voila tout!* Having now inserted in this letter every phrase, French and German, with which I am acquainted, I think it a proper moment to retire gracefully from public admiration!"

Here follows a pen-and-ink sketch of a traveller, knapsack and alpenstock, bowing his adieux, with this added apology:

"Sorry to spoil a work of art. If I had not dried the above with my fingers you would

have had to wait another day for the entire communication."

The "Austrian" alluded to in this letter is clearly his sister Ellinor, a vocalist of some pretensions, who was touring at the time in the Tyrol. The Mr. Baring, who failed to frank Mrs. Reade's letter, was probably Mr. Thomas Baring, the head of the firm whose father, Sir Thomas, was for many years one of the firmest friends of the Squire of Ipsden. Being ignorant of how to transmit money abroad,—it is doubtful whether circular notes had by then become an institution,—Mrs. Reade in all likelihood had requested her great banker friend to manage this for her, but very possibly had omitted, by way of preliminary, to forward him the money, for she was amazingly unpractical. Whether the missing letter ever reached its destination remains a mystery without a clue. We may be certain, notwithstanding, that son Charles was not a loser to that extent.

The passing allusion to the Ipsden birds, and the parenthetical inquiry, "Who shoots?" tell their own tale. The Ipsden estate ran from Stoke Marmyon, or Littlestoke, the fine

old homestead of which is a conspicuous object from the railway bridge over the Thames at Moulsford, to Stoke-row Common, by Nettlebed. Quite half the estate is arable, and Ipsden farm being one of the most productive of cereals in the county, birds were plentiful, as also hares. The remaining half of the estate is dense beech-wood, with a large rabbit warren for its centre, and the weird Common * where, after Prestonpans, Mary Reade's ill-fated husband, General Mackintoshe, took refuge from the pursuing soldiers of King George. Sport, therefore, was a moral certainty, far more so than at present, for whereas the woods now teem with pheasants there remain but few hares, and the rabbits have been well nigh exterminated. Partridge-shooting, however, was the specialty of Ipsden, and Charles Reade was as passionately fond of it as his father. An inquiry, therefore, about the birds in an epistle dated August 14th

* Called the Scot's Common, because General Mackintoshe with his companions encamped there. After three weeks' concealment by his father-in-law, the General's lair was discovered, and he bolted over the Downs to Shoreham in Sussex, escaped to France, and from thence made his way to America, where his wife joined him. The spot is worth a visit.

somewhat emphasizes the writer's opening asseveration that "there's no place like home." Switzerland evidently was all very well, but not after August 31st.

It must be added that Charles Reade shot, as he did everything else of the manly sort, well, but not with absolute equanimity. Few men bore the mortification of missing a shot with worse grace—at the moment. Ten minutes later the disappointment was forgotten, and he who in the loudest terms would blaspheme all the Fates because a miserable bird escaped destruction, would sit down to luncheon and philosophize, strike extraordinary attitudes, and even dance his favourite double shuffle. The gamekeeper, William Johnson, adored "Master Chawse," and so also, to reveal a secret, did the local poacher, Jack Clayton.

CHAPTER XIII.

CREMONAPHILISM.

DURING the years immediately following his brief tour abroad, Charles Reade oscillated between London, Ipsden, and Scotland. It is a matter for regret that we possess the most meagre details only of his tours. He was a great pedestrian, and withal preferred to carry his gun. The Thames, moreover, in which his father owned a large eyot, with sundry fishing rights, had made him a fisherman—to his cost, be it added, for it is a fact that he was unwise enough to risk a few hundreds, when they could ill be spared from his exchequer, in a herring-fishery venture, which was far from proving a financial success.

It was his habit in those early days of railways to avoid the trouble both of packing up, carrying luggage, and forming plans an

hour in advance, by keeping a complete outfit at different points of the compass. He provided himself with a wardrobe on a really lavish scale at Oxford; a second and similar outfit for Ipsden, where his chamber was held sacred to his sole use; and a third for his lodgings in town. Thus he could appear at any one of these points without a shred of luggage; and a very pleasant arrangement it was for a gentleman who never quite knew his own mind. Moreover, the telegraph was not then in the land, and railway travelling without luggage is robbed of half its terrors. He felt bored with Leicester Square. What more sensible than to drive to Paddington, run down to Moulsford, and walk across to the paternal mansion? Oxford with its dons and duns wearied him. What better than to stroll over Magdalen Bridge, put his best leg forward and by degrees pass Nuneham, Dorchester, Shillingford, and Crowmarsh, till at length the glorious beech-woods greeted his eye from White Hill, and he felt himself at home. Or mayhap the Squire's temper was ruffled, or his mother forgot to be quite as fondling as usual. Then how simple to order the carriage

at a moment's notice, drive to Reading, and catch the express, which in three quarters of an hour would land him in the metropolis?

His lodgings in the vicinity of Leicester Square were a curiosity. He had developed a craze for violins, and these instruments, with rosin and cat-gut in profusion, lay strewed about the floor, in combination with articles of wearing apparel, books, and playbills. To one entering the rooms, however, the most startling phenomenon was what we may term their *fauna*. The whole place was alive with squirrels, who bolted up the curtains, and seemed to enjoy themselves as in their native beech-woods at Ipsden. It was from this coign of vantage that Charles Reade sallied forth in quest of character. Dickens had rapidly built up a reputation by reproducing oddities, and it would seem that our author, when he first began to dream dreams of authorship, imagined that the short cut to literary success was to pick up and photograph some human porcupine. In after years, as we know, he attached far more importance to construction than to character; but in early life, like Jerrold, Albert Smith, and the rest of what may be

termed the Dickens school, he felt the fascination of inimitable character delineation, and it is a fact that in his researches amongst the by-ways of humanity he not only disguised himself, but studied low life. It was probably while thus in quest of the odd and angular that he encountered a craftsman learned in the art of fiddle-making, a being, moreover, with as keen a scent for the habitat of a rare violin as the truffle-dog for the fungus beneath the roots of trees. Whether this man was a Belgian or a Frenchman is uncertain. Enough that he had devoted his life to the violin, not merely as a maker, but as a virtuoso, and by his long connection with the trade in Paris had acquired positive knowledge of where, throughout the world, all the rarest violins were to be discovered. Between him and Charles Reade there existed for a time a sort of partnership, and that he initiated his patron into the mysteries of the craft may be inferred from the following anecdote.

Charles Reade was journeying from Scotland to London, and as was his wont through life, even in the days when he was far from rich, travelled first-class. The way was long, and to

relieve its tedium he fell into conversation with his *vis-à-vis*, an individual in every way prepossessing. After a while the desultory chatter accidentally turned on fiddles, and the stranger remarked, *passim*, that he possessed one by a particular maker.

"Then," smiled Charles Reade knowingly, "I have the honour of addressing Lord ——?"

The stranger shook his head.

"No?" echoed our author. "In that case you must be Colonel ——?"

The stranger at once confessed that the surmise was correct, but asked how, in the name of wonder, he came thus to be able to detect his identity?

"Because," said Charles Reade, "there are only two violins of the maker you name in this country. Lord —— has one, you the other." In a memorandum among Charles Reade's papers we find a casual allusion to the Cremona violin as "a worthless thing," whereof, so he writes, I was "the first connoisseur in England," from which we infer that he lived to regret the time and money he had expended on the cult of fiddles.

This fancy for fiddles had one disastrous

effect—it led to a temporary disagreement between the clever son and his fine old father, the Squire. Ipsden House is the ancient manor-house. The mansion built by William Reade for his daughter on her marriage with Mr. Vachell was pulled down in the last century, at the time when the timber of the park was sold to pacify the mortgagees, and the park itself was ploughed up. The Squire of that era converted the old manor-house into a mansion by adding to and altering it. The whole is an architectural *olla podrida*, and to render it more incongruous, as has been narrated, Charles Reade's mother, when she came from Court to play *châtelaine* therein, induced her husband to paint the good old brick a garish white. Now the Squire was a martinet as regards order. When, therefore, son Charles imported from London or Paris violins, and further, thought fit to convert his bed-chamber into a fiddle manufactory, all Ipsden House knew that there was the chance of a storm, not to say a cyclone.

However, as the Squire never dreamt of poking his nose into every corner of the house, this little eccentricity might have been hidden

from him, albeit the odours of varnish are themselves rather tell-tale. Unfortunately son Charles, the very genius of domestic disorder, was so imprudent as to try his combinations of amber on the window-sill of his bed-room, which happened to face the carriage drive.

The effect can easily be imagined. Not only did the sill present a surface of different shades of brown in hideous patches, but the white walls of the house also were streaked with these umber fluids. The Squire saw this, and exploded with indignation. What he said has not been handed down to posterity. It must have been sufficiently disagreeable, for his son Charles went off to London in a huff, and thence to Paris. Moreover, to emphasize his displeasure at the paternal rebuke, he did not communicate by letter or otherwise with Ipsden House for more than six months.

His father bore this philosophically; not so his fond mother, who fretted and fumed and was quite half inclined to quarrel with her husband. However, at last filial affection re-asserted its sway. A letter arrived, and was responded to by an urgent request that he would reappear as though nothing had

happened. This he did, and so the ugly episode ended.

That his penchant for violins, which at this period of his life amounted to an overpowering passion, was a serious matter may be inferred from the subjoined. One smiles to view him in the light of a tradesman—a part he of all men was least qualified to play. Suffice it that he left behind no ledger, no balance-sheet, no record of transactions—for the simple reason that he kept none.

The following Petition to the Lords of the Treasury is headed in his MSS.

"HOW CHARLES READE WROTE BEFORE HE WAS A WRITER."

His literary evolution, we perceive from internal evidence, was now virtually complete. The nine years intervening between 1839 and 1848 had made the mere scribbler a master of English. He takes up the cudgels in self-defence with characteristic vigour, and the narrative of fact needs no comment. It tells its own story, as Charles Reade alone could tell it.

"I import old Italian and German Violins as Merchandise, paying the Queen's dues, although the profits of this trade are so precarious that I am the only importing Merchant in England. I have of late encountered in the Custom House a spirit of extortion which many candid persons think misapplied to articles of vertu having a mere speculative value. For some time I have seen that I should have to Petition your Lordships for the protection of my oppressed trade. The case that at last brings me before you is this.

"About three months ago, I being occupied in London, there arrived for me at Southampton a case containing a Violoncello and the carcasses of some twenty old violins. My Southampton Agent wrote to me for a valuation. He did not think it necessary to send me the number of the Articles, nor had I an invoice or inventory. I sent down a valuation £50. If I had seen the Goods landed myself I should have valued them about £80. I value upon a system, viz. about £4 a piece for the carcasses of these third and fourth-rate Italian violins. They are worth no more,

because it costs £2 of English work and of materials that have paid duty in other hands to make one of these carcasses into a playable, saleable instrument.

"A London Officer went down to see the goods. This man is a superficial Smatterer upon a deep and difficult subject. He is in that state of quarter knowledge, in which men are sure to fall into more dangerous errors than when they know nothing at all.

"He began (*on dit*) by telling the Southampton Officers that I had valued my goods at one-sixth of their just value. He next observed that he would give £200 for them himself: here was already a fluctuation of thirty-three and one-third per cent. in this loose-tongued valuation.

"The next oscillation, as chance would have it, was £250. On this it appears my Goods were stopped.

"Informed by my Agent that I was said to have undervalued to so fraudulent an extent, I was astounded. In order to get to some understanding of what they were saying I sent down Mr. John Lott, an intelligent workman, to examine the case. He left me expecting

to find a Bass that has paid duty before, and some fifteen or sixteen fresh Violins. He found instead the said Bass and some twenty-two Violins and tenors; but amongst the latter he recognized one or two that, like the Bass, had been in the Country before, and paid duty at the same port.

"I petitioned the Honourable Board of Commissioners, as is usual, and this was the line of my Petition.

"I frankly admitted the Goods were undervalued according to my own system of valuation, through an error that merely respected the number of articles; but on the other hand, I affirmed that the London Officer's valuation was extravagantly false, and of this I besought their Honours to admit sound evidence, viz. the judgment of the only competent persons in the Kingdom—experienced London Dealers.

"And I petitioned to be allowed to amend my valuation, presuming that competent evidence should remove that impression of excessive undervaluation which hitherto rested on one incompetent witness.

"The Board's reply was, 'the Goods to be

dealt with.' But it was my fortune to catch a glimpse of a Document, by which I learned the basis of their Honours' decision was actually the London Officer's Estimate, £250, accepted in full with all the respect due to a competent connoisseur. My way of arguing is to begin with the points of Agreement. I agree with the Honourable Board that if £250 is the true value of the Violin carcasses detained at Southampton, there is no room for my explanation on the ground of error; the difference between £50 and £250 is too great.

"On the other hand, if I should prove £250 to be as wide of the mark one way as £50 is the other, and without the same excuse, I have a right to presume on the principle, 'Sublatâ causâ tollitur effectus,' that the Commissioners would feel disposed, did it rest with them, to resign the unusual course into which they have been led by a natural error. I have not lost my confidence in that Honourable Board's justice when properly informed; but something more than they can tell me it is necessary for me to learn.

"It is not only the fate of a single consignment, but of an entire though small branch

of commerce that now depends upon your Lordships.

"To this innocent little commerce, profitable in a high proportion to the Revenue, and what is singular in an import trade, *the only stay at the same time* of the English Workman, terms are now offered that evade by a trick the limits set by the tariff statute. They are terms under which the import trade cannot maintain any existence at all: this is my best excuse for the tedious length at which I am compelled by the difficulties of my subject to address your Lordships.

"The valuation (£250) I attack rests upon nothing but the dictum of one solitary individual, an employé in the Custom House, supposed by the Commissioners to have thoroughly mastered in his moments of leisure a subject twice as deep, delusive, and difficult as that of ancient paintings, and six times as delusive as any third business that exercises the critical powers of man.

"My Lords, this is so far from being true that it is impossible; it is an impossibility well known to every Gentleman and Tradesman that knows anything about the matter.

"There is no ploughboy in this nation who can square the circle when he has unharnessed his team, and there is no amateur of violins who can set the just value upon the peculiar varieties in one of my consignments.

"The Rational Amateur who has bought true violins at authentic sources knows something; knowing something he knows his incapacity to tell the makes and values of third and fourth-rate specimens. It is only the mere ignorant dreamer of this class who has not arrived to know even his own ignorance.

"I would gladly evade the almost impossible task of trying to give your Lordships any idea of the depth, variety, and difficulty of this kind of vertu.

"I fear I shall be very tiresome; I entreat your Lordships' patience whilst I attempt to explain the misty principles that govern the high value of things worth in reality next to nothing.

"Since the year 1814, when men first arose that studied the principles on which a violin should be constructed to sound well, the reputation of old fiddles for tone has been justly shaken, and is now known by two-thirds

of the world to be no longer sound, although it was sound between the years 1750 and 1814; for during that interval no Fiddle Maker existed in Europe capable of constructing a violin. At present there are more scientific and intelligent Fiddle Makers than ever existed at Cremona.

"Still, all the intelligence of the present day has failed to discover one secret possessed by Italy and Germany up to 1750, and lost to the whole world about that time, viz. the secret of fusing amber and making a varnish of oil, said amber, and soluble gums, red, brown, or yellow, but absolutely transparent. This varnish, pretty in itself, and prettier in an old violin, because the wear and use of a century gives it light and shade and picturesque forms, constitutes the only real reason why from £5 to £400 is given for musical instruments that in beauty of wood and in sound can always be matched for thirty shillings from the immense mass of new violins open to the public.

"If old violins have any fixed merit it is their appearance. We are, in fact, agreed that, in a word, it is their wood which sets off their varnish, and their varnish which sets off their

wood. But where the amateur is of necessity thrown out is here—he is not in a position to estimate the value of names—what he is led to suppose a fixed merit can only be bought and sold as such under the domineering influence of names.

"Merit never comes to bear until first filtered through the consideration of name. If then a Man looks at twenty old fiddles, the merits of which he can see, but does not know who made each and how that Maker ranks in the Market—where is he? and what is he?—a sailor on the wide Pacific without a compass or a star is not more the sport of water and wind than such a man as this is of flighty dreams and of brute chance.

"Your Lordships may depend on the following selection out of a thousand parallel facts—

"No. 1. A Violin by Joseph Guarnerius of Cremona, with plain wood and pale varnish, worth therefore only £70.

"No. 2. A violin by Joseph Guarnerius, with handsome wood and red varnish, worth therefore £200.

"No. 3. Violin, Joseph Guarnerius, fine wood, red varnish, and without a crack, £300.

"No. 4. Violin, Carlo Bergonzi of Cremona, finer wood and varnish than No. 2, worth £40.

"No. 5. Carolus Ferdinandus Landolpis of Milan, same wood and varnish as No. 4, worth £7.

"No. 6. Violin, Dominica Montagnano of Venice, worth £3.

"No. 7. Violin, Dominica Montagnano, finer wood and varnish than No. 3, worth £8.

"No. 8. An ugly broken-down fiddle, Amatus of Cremona, £25.

"No. 9. A fine specimen. Ditto. £40.

"No. 10. A finer still by his pupil, Francesco Rugger, £14.

"No. 11. A finer still, Giudantus of Florence, £12.

"No. 12. A finer still, Sanctus Serafin of Venice, £10.

"No. 13. An equally fine, Gatenari of Florence, £8.

"No. 14. A good-looking violin, Grancina of Milan, £6.

"No. 14. A better Levazza, Milan, £4.

"No. 15. Carlo Bergonzi, average, £15.

"No. 16. Matteo Gioffriller of Venice, twice as fine, and not distinguishable by an Amateur from the same make, worth £5.

"No. 17. The entire School of Venice, equal in merit to that of Cremona, and possessed of quite as fine a varnish, but worth in the market 800 per cent. less.

"I put it to yourselves, my Lords, whether anything short of real tangible critical knowledge can guide a valuer through a labyrinth of which this is only the first turn.

"Ask an Amateur how many names he knows, and he will quote you about eight names;

ask him to write down upon paper the nice little distinctions and details of work by which he is to know even these few at sight, he cannot do it: even this first page of a profound study is beyond him. Why cannot he write them down on paper? because he has not really got them in his eye and his brain ready for use.

"Now what will your Lordships think when I tell you that instead of eight or ten, one hundred and eighty Makers are known to have worked in Italy alone, and to have used that amber varnish which, seen by a dreamer, is straightway taken by him for a proof of one of those eight or ten valuable varieties. Of these 180 more than one half are beneath the real connoisseur's notice; but he knows more than 60, familiarly knows them at sight, knows their work, their style, and their value, and he knows them too positively to confound the other 120 with them.

"But this knowledge requires a rare combination of talent and opportunity. It demands a fine Eye, a strong memory, a clear head, the constant practice of examining the insides as well as outsides of hundreds of Specimens,

and above all, to have invested thousands of pounds in the trade; for no judgment can be formed except by risking loss as well as gain upon it hundreds of times.

"This is why none but an experienced Dealer ever was a real Connoisseur, nor ever will be as long as this world shall last.

"Now without the above advantages, any person of mere general intelligence and taste for old violins would be sure to overvalue my consignments, for this plain reason—I am a great connoisseur, and when I buy violins of low name and value do buy what?—not poor specimens of them, but of course the finest specimens of them, which are little dearer than the poorer ones. Now the *chefs-d'œuvre* of a £4 Maker are really finer, and often much finer, than the average of a £40 Maker, or even of an £100 Maker.

"The Amateur has no idea of this, so when he sees a fine thing, he argues backwards that it must be by a valued Maker. The tendency of this error is clear: the value of it is far beyond calculation. Once begin ascribing my goods to the narrow list of names known even by rote in the City, or valuing them as they would

sell if they could but come under that narrow list of names, and a thousand per cent. over valuation is an easy natural result. That result, my Lords, has once actually occurred to me and from the same quarter.

"There are three classes of persons in and about this class of vertu:

"1. The connoisseur who must have been many years a practised dealer.

"2. The respectable intelligent Amateur, who has bought at their true prices true violins of responsible Dealers or under judgment of such.

"3. The Dreamer, who is always on the look-out for chances that imply a contradiction in terms, such as 'to pick up' (that is his phrase) a highly valuable fiddle for a little money.

"He is capable of abusing understanding to such an extent as this:

"He knows that certain old violins fetch high prices only because they are excessively rare, that if not excessively rare they could not be so valuable, that could they by a miracle cease to be excessively rare they must then cease to be valuable, and yet he no sooner sees

a flock of grey geese come over the water than he says, 'Behold a flock of black swans,' and he winds up a pretty piece of Idiocy by valueing the varieties, that it seems have become as common as dirt to please him, at the value they had before they became common.

"It is his ground of faith that every good-looking old violin which comes here is Cremonese, and that every Cremonese is highly valuable, and can find a purchaser at once like silks or brandy.

"Estimate the Haze in which these babblers are lost before they take their first step.

"Of Foreign Fiddles carrying an appearance of value to these Smatterers, thirty out of forty are not Italian even, but French and German; out of the Italian ones, thirty-six out of forty are not Cremonese, but made at Parma, Mantua, Padua, Verona, Turin, Livorno, Florence, Naples, Rome, Venice, Milan, and other Italian towns, and in towns and villages of the Tyrol; of the Cremonese, which alone carry high price, some are by unprized makers and have little value. Two makers alone could make sure, upon anything like a forced sale, of fetching more than £15, and these, in fact,

are the only true property or secure investment. Need I add that my case contains no single specimen of the rarer class?

"I have to complain of a valuation that proceeds on three broad and grave errors.

"1. An error critical, immense exaggeration of the importance of the specimens.

"2. A suppression or omission of a heavy drawback on the value of my goods, under the only title that brings them beneath the Tariff at all.

"You are to understand that my carcasses and scrolls of violins are caught hold of by the Customs as Musical Instruments of Foreign manufacture. This is not strictly true. They are, in point of fact, Foreign articles of vertu, and Foreign materials for English Manufacture of Musical Instruments.

"Before I can make these carcasses into Musical Instruments what must I do? Why, my Lords, I must go to a French importing House, and buy the following materials and accessories that have already accounted with the Customs in their hands, viz.—

"20 Necks made of Harewood, 4*s*. a piece.
80 Ebony pegs.

20 Ebony Finger boards.
20 do. Tail pieces.
20 Bridges.
80 Strings.

This done, I must engage with an English Workman to take off the bellies of every carcass except the Bass: to cut out the old Bass Bars, which will not support the modern system of tuning a violin; to shape and glue new bass bars; to open and clean and glue all the cracks in those twenty carcasses and secure them with pieces; to shape and fit the necks to the scrolls and to the carcasses; to shape and fit the finger boards to the necks; to cut and fit the bridges to each Instrument respectively; to strengthen the bellies of one half of them inside with pieces, carefully and laboriously; to string them up.

"To re-cut a Maggini tenor, not saleable in England unless recut—this alone is a £5 job.

"This drawback, my Lords, is at least £45; most workmen would expect £60 for it. Now this drawback has not been fairly put before the Honourable Commissioners by the Pseudo-Valuer, and it is a very grave suppression; one

effect of it is just this: A piece of stuff is valued by anticipation as high as all the garments to be made here out of that stuff and supplied with linings and accessories. The other effect of it will be treated elsewhere. And here I throw myself with confidence upon the honour of the Commissioners of the Customs. Let them say, 'Was this drawback placed before them in *figures?*' If not, the present valuation is rotten for want of detail on one whole side.

"But I would fain go farther, and ask even another question, and I throw myself upon the honour of the Board, and in particular Sir Thomas Fremantle, for the answer. Was it impressed upon the Board, that my goods are violins, &c., that could be sold at all to Violin Players upon being cleared, or was the impression left that they are mere carcasses, broken carcasses, which could only be sold to the speculating Dealer?

"If the former impression has been left with the Board, their Judgment has been fraudulently obtained; if the latter, we come by another road to what I said three months ago, and say now, that the Dealers and Workmen are

the only men who can value these battered carcasses.

"Oh! my Lords, if you or the Commissioners would only condescend to look at the things, you or they would see how shamefully they have been imposed upon in this respect. Just see how the Commissioners have backed and filled before they could drift into their false valuation. They take the population of England at 15,000,000. This population has at its left extremity 14,999,975 persons who would say, and with reason, on looking at my goods, 'Rubbish, not worth £10;' at its right a few practical judges capable of saying for what (although really worth nothing) they would sell through the caprice of a small clique. The Commissioners with their left hand set aside the 14,999,975, including themselves, on the plea of ignorance; then, instead of carrying out their idea, they wheel about, and with the right hand set aside all who have real competent knowledge; and so we get rid with one gesture of Common sense, with a reverse gesture we lose specific knowledge and arrive at a fool's paradise.

"I come to Error 3. This is an error that

arises out of not knowing the violin trade—it is an important error, because

> "The value of a thing
> Is never more than it will bring."

The error principally consists in the use of false analogies to supply the want of specific knowledge. There is only one other trade from which any light can be thrown upon the old violin trade, and that is the Picture Trade. By keeping this sister trade out of sight, and by drawing one's notions, as a Custom House Officer naturally would, from silks, linens, watches, cotton, one is sure to go sixty or seventy per cent. out of the true reckoning. The Buyers of other Merchandise are so numerous that one can always be found if the Proprietor will set a moderate price. But here it is the reverse. The public buyers are so few that it is impossible to secure at any given period the profitable sale of a single violin, much less twenty. The very idea of selling twenty fiddles at the same time, without losing money by them, could never have entered the head of one who knows this miserable trade. The whole annual trade of

London in old Italian violins hardly amounts to twenty *bonâ fide* sales; most of the sales neutralize one another, No. 1 coming back to the Dealer in part exchanged for No. 2, and No. 2 for No. 3.'

"Upon anything like a forced sale—such as with satins, silks, &c. might only entail a loss of 15 or 20 per cent.—the loss upon violins would be three or four hundred per cent. in many cases: incalculable in others: ruinous in all.

"Any one who knows the trade knows there is but one way of selling violins without being ruined by them, and that is to deposit them in shops, and wait quietly one, two, three, four, six, fifteen, twenty years, until a customer's caprice happens to give an opportunity of selling to advantage. It is under the title of a Valuer that a man exists who leaves the business or heaviness of return out of his calculation of average value.

"It seems odd that two men should differ as to the meaning of so simple a phrase as this—for every £100, £10 Tariff. Yet we do. The Pseudo-Valuer says the Legislature demands of me £10 on the 1st of August, 1848,

for every £100 I shall receive upon the 1st of August, 1851. I say No, that is not £10 in a given £100, but £10 out of a £100 mutilated by the loss of three years' interest and compound interest; and it was intended by the Legislature, that for every £10 I pay the Customs on the 1st of August I should be able to get £100 before the end of the month, or if I must wait for three years on the average, should in that case get more than £100, and considerably more.

"In this paper, my Lords, it is not my intention to ask of your Lordships any other favour than Justice, or rather a chance of Justice. There is nothing against me, my consignment of Goods, or the future existence of my trade, but a false statement made by an ignorant Monomaniac, and coloured partly to his wishes and partly by the suggestions of private speculation. I ask to be permitted to bring that statement to some satisfactory test: it is not for me to decide the manner, but I hope it will be the examination upon oath of persons in the trade. Do not think that I am even then in a better position than I deserve. There is no person in the trade whose interest

is identical with mine; there are one or two who would do me an injury if they could—there is one who at this moment is amusing himself with writing anonymous letters, filled with malicious falsehoods against me. Do you think, my Lords, I would not rather fall into the hands of even this fellow than of a mad Babbler about this kind of trade? Certainly; because a limit can be placed to such a man by examination on Oath; but ignorance cannot be modified. Malice is a blackguard, but Ignorance is a Wild Beast.

"The mighty favour I beg, my Lords, is, that my goods may be valued by a body of men who are my rivals, or would be if they could; and I beg this favour, my Lords, on the high grounds of truth and justice.

"If an appeal to Cæsar could make all proceedings pause in the most distant Roman province, I hope an appeal to Truth and Justice cannot fail to create a pause and consideration here in England, especially when that appeal comes direct to the rulers of the people. I appeal by name to the Right Honourable Lord John Russell to give Truth and Justice a chance by giving them a bare hearing—that hearing

which is their right and mine, has been up to this moment refused to them and me.

"I, a Merchant, though a small one, appeal to Lord John Russell by name as a great patron of commerce.

"That great Gentleman is also appealed to by a small and unfortunate gentleman, who declares upon his sacred honour that the proceedings about to take place are unjust, ridiculous upon all grounds of Public Government, originating in a blind greediness, that, carried out, would destroy the Revenue by crushing trade, and approved by Commissioners upon the crass *ipse dixit* of an uninformed, isolated, unconscientious Man, who has not been examined on Oath, or cross-examined; whose previous false, insane, extravagant, and fraudulent valuations of similar property are known to everybody but to the Commissioners, and shall be proved and attested by the Oaths of numerous disinterested persons whenever your Lordships or the Board of Commissioners are disposed to know the truth, instead of guessing at a distance through a haze of illusory circumstances and babbling dreams.

"And so, my Lords, I come to you and

humbly beg for that which in most situations an Englishman can demand—Inquiry. Without Inquiry, Justice has not the shadow of the Ghost of a chance, especially in my case; by Inquiry I mean Examination on Oath and Cross-examination.

"My Lords, my fate is in your hands, and as God is my Judge, my commerce lives or perishes at a word from your lips.

"I am the last Importer left—I can maintain my ground under the ten per cent. duty. No other man in England can: the best proof is, no other man attempts it as a Merchant. But once begin to tamper with that ten per cent. duty by over-valuation, once substitute by sleight of hand twenty-seven per cent., which in its honest English is what the Custom House proposes to me in Thieves' Latin, and your Lordships, in point of fact, prohibit a patriotic Commerce.

"You, my Lords, would not do such a thing; but in order not to do it you must actually interfere and prevent the Custom House from doing it.

"The matter is now before you, my Lords, and from this hour whatever is done is done

not by Subordinates, but by the Government, on the well-known principles of Her Majesty's present Government.

"I throw myself now, and I shall again throw myself, on them in my document No. 2, in the course of which I shall show you why my commerce—*unlike every other in the World*—contains in itself no principle of protection against the private fraudulent speculations of Custom House Officers. At present I conclude by earnestly imploring the bare preliminary justice of a *bonâ fide* inquiry into the marketable value of a particular Consignment, and the state and capabilities of the trade.

"And I hereby petition your Lordships to forbid the sale by Custom House Auction of my Goods until the false evidence at present before the Commissioners has been brought to the touch-stone of Cross-examination, and compared with a mass of Evidence upon Oath, by which I am prepared to confute it."

It may seem strange that a Fellow of Magdalen, not without ambition or industry, and gifted by nature with commanding talent, should have embraced the law as a profession

merely to abandon it. Charles Reade, in his undergraduate days, as his friend Canon Bernard Smith testifies, always imagined himself a limb of the law, and there is one pointed reference to his profession in a letter to his father. Nevertheless, he resigned himself contentedly to a *dolce far niente* style of existence, though never even in his idlest moments did he cease to be a student. In his papers we discover a rather embittered confession of what he terms baldly a wasted youth; and it is almost certain that when he selected the title, 'It is never too Late to Mend' for the book he then considered his *chef-d'œuvre*, it was his own career that suggested that well-worn proverb. "I made notes," he writes in a singular vein of self-reproach, "but I never wrote a book for the public till I was thirty-five. Then, at an age when most men's habits are fixed, I began my real life."

From this we glean that he did not actually put pen to paper seriously before 1850, in which and the succeeding year he laboured hard to make up for lost ground. "I wrote," he says, "first for the stage—about thirteen dramas which nobody would play."

Before we approach what we will term, in his own phraseology, his real life, we will glance once more at his butterfly existence.

It will not unnaturally occur to the mind of the observant that such a man as Charles Reade, a handsome and *debonnaire* gentleman, acceptable in society, with distinguished manners, and powers of conversation amounting almost to fascination, must have been influenced once, if not more than once, by the fair sex. He preferred ladies' society to men's even in his earliest days, and most assuredly had never any cause of complaint on the score of neglect or coldness from women both clever and attractive. At home he did not encounter a superabundance of society of any kind. The deaths of their three eldest sons and of their beautiful and brilliant daughter, Julia, saddened the Squire and his vivacious wife, and caused them to avoid society so far as their position rendered such avoidance possible. His sister Ellinor, however, had her circle of friends, who visited Ipsden at chronic intervals. It would be erroneous, therefore, to suggest that Charles Reade kept quite clear of the tender passion. But whatever he may have felt or wished,

circumstances had stamped him as a non-marrying man. Marriage would have deprived him of that small competence he valued so dearly—his Fellowship at Magdalen. True, he might have married money, but it may be affirmed safely, that had he married at all it would have been from a different and higher motive. As a matter of plain fact, the alliance he may secretly have coveted was, for pecuniary reasons, an impossibility. He realized this, and never permitted himself to drift into a false position. What might have happened had he been endowed with independence it is not quite difficult to surmise. His dependence on the College was perhaps his misfortune, since it interposed a barrier between him and the one lady whom in the best days of his manhood he idealized, and never forgot, even in his dying moments. It was, perhaps, the inability to marry in accordance with his inclination that kept him clear of all matrimonial ideas of any kind. Yet he was very charming, and, without knowing it, became the centre of any *coterie*. With the loss of his lively presence the family circle soon gloomed over, and it must be added, that if a favourite with the

elders, he was adored by his juniors of either sex. At Ipsden, in the holiday time, his sister Julia's only son and daughter, and his brother Compton's eldest son and daughter were regular visitors, and being much of the same age, formed a pleasant quartette.

"Boys," said he one dull afternoon to his two nephews, "shall I take you out shooting, or sing you some songs?"

The boys gave discordant answers. "Shoot," cried young Allen Gardiner, then fresh from Harrow. "Sing," pleaded the other.

"There," said Charles Reade, with prophetic solemnity, "is an index of the future of both you fellows."

He was right. Young Allen became a roving missionary in South America, and his other nephew joined the choir of Magdalen.

He seemed, moreover, to enjoy at that time the society of these nephews and nieces; indeed, on one occasion he deserted his beloved Paris to meet them, and grumbled persistently for a week at our English climate. Not that he was in the least degree ungracious to the young people. On the contrary, he brought down a complete set of archery for their amusement,

sang them all his songs, and in the evening wrote comic verses to make them laugh. Of his nieces, and especially of his niece Anna, afterwards Mrs. R. A. J. Drummond, he was more than fond, a thoroughly attentive cavalier. Looking back on those halcyon days, his relatives, or rather those that survive, might well feel that his singular amiability and good nature more than atoned for the inaction he so poignantly regretted; for after he began to slave at literature, and to hunger for approbation, he developed an irritability to which previously he had been a stranger. Success changed him—certainly in respect of manner, sympathy, and predilection, though the alteration was mainly on the surface. This was perhaps inevitable. Had he remained a mere butterfly, he would have escaped exertion and its results, but his life would have been wholly ruined. It is a fact, none the less, that toil hardens most men's natures, whereas ease has the contrary effect.

It is remarkable also how rapidly labour aged him. As late as 1853, when he walked in the solemn procession of doctors and dons to the Sheldonian theatre to witness the installation

of the late Lord Derby as Chancellor of the University, the query passed from mouth to mouth, "Who can that very juvenile doctor be?" and reached the ear of his fond sister Ellinor, who was the guest of the venerable Doctor Macbride, at Magdalen Hall. In 1845 he was in the very prime of manhood. Then it was that at Liverpool he hit Alfred Mynn, the Spofforth of the period, round the field, and his scores not seldom ran up three figures. His prowess in the art of throwing a casting net was extraordinary, and he excelled in every manly sport he took up, including archery, bowls, and skittles. There was a very pretty skittle-alley in the groom's yard of Magdalen College, and another in the Grove; and the College groom, with his stable helpers, used to find plenty of employment when Charles Reade happened to be in residence. Paris could not make a *petit-maître* of such essentially virile material. Town, with its pleasures, failed to render his fibre effeminate. He eat largely, drank very sparingly,—for the most part cold water and tea,—took a super-abundance of exercise, and lived very much the life of Lord Beaconsfield's typical aristocrat,

who was perpetually in the open air, and never opened a book.

This last, however, applied to him in the comparative degree only, for he read between his amusements, and at forty boasted a mind more largely stored with the treasures of English literature than that of any among his academical contemporaries. At that period Oxford had gone crazed about mediævalism and black letter. Theology was its one topic —if we except architecture; and students who had fathomed the recondite mysteries of ogees, awmbries, corbels, and crockets were ignorant of Massinger, if not of Milton. A bookworm like Mozley plodded to some purpose, for he was not merely antiquarian, but realistic. Yet after all, where Mozley had one reader, Charles Reade could boast ten thousand. The one appealed to a very limited circle; the other to the widest and most lasting. The one taught by represented or unrepresented dramas; the other by sermons and essays. Nobody desires to speak of Professor Mozley otherwise than with the respect his ant-like industry and profound sincerity deserve; but when an eminent public writer thought fit to quote

Mozley as an exemplar of all that was admirable in Magdalen, and to fling a sneer at the one Magdalen Fellow of that epoch, whose fame is in the least degree likely to outlast this century, he evinced a lack of appreciation which unfortunately is only too common to academic natures.

It was perhaps inevitable that a virile specimen of manhood enhanced by genius should be half-scorned in a place where mental virility was unknown, and pedantry passed for talent. It was inevitable also that such a man, with all the warmth of youth adhering to him, should be idolized in the domestic circle. "We will use our brains," he would say after tea in the lovely summer evenings, lovelier nowhere within these four seas than at glorious Ipsden, "we will use our brains." And so the whole family clustered round him with paper and pencils, and scribbled verses of all sorts in competition. Some few of these poetical essays were preserved, including those of Charles Reade, but, needless to add, they would not bear reproduction outside the domestic circle.

It was characteristic, moreover, of the man who in after years was laughed at because

his plays, forsooth, were always "so very good!" *i. e.* based on sound morality, that neither Oxford, Paris, nor London could spoil his natural and graceful simplicity. At forty he was quite half a boy; at forty-five he played at cricket with the old zest; at sixty-eight he entered heartily into tennis. His natural spring was surprising, and enabled him, when in middle age he took up his pen in right good earnest, to wield that weapon as Mercury and not as Saturn. "Pick yourself out, my good chap," was his advice to his nephew when the cob he was riding rolled in a pond, rider and all. And this advice, later on, he applied to his own case. The time came when labour was no longer a matter of choice, but of necessity, and he then demonstrated clearly, that as of yore he had played so could he work. His Pegasus pitched him into the mud, and his wit pulled him out.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE Revolution of 1848 surprised Charles Reade in Paris, and the conduct of its leading spirits, whereof he was an unwilling eye-witness, caused him in 'Christie Johnstone' to style the French Assembly "a den of wild beasts fed on *eau sucrée*."

The subsequent horrors of the *coup d'état* have almost obliterated, as in some measure they eclipsed, those of the antecedent revolution which expelled the citizen king, who sought refuge on English soil as Mr. Smith. Moreover, the special reporter was an institution not then invented, and although the 'Times' gave graphic descriptions of the scenes at the barricades, the English public were informed of but a tithe of what occurred. At the moment Compton happened to have a

house at Hampstead, and thitherwards one evening, weary and flustered, his author brother hurried to relieve the pent-up feelings of his relatives. The 'Times' had narrated with fidelity the strong anti-English feeling prevalent among the intoxicated Republicans, and it is a simple fact, that a massacre of our countrymen was considered imminent. The Republic wished to consecrate its birth by a holocaust of harmless guests, and it is marvellous that this vile project was not carried into execution. We can only compare the apprehension of those who then had friends in Paris to that evoked nine years later by the tidings of the Indian Mutiny.

"My dear Charles," cried his brother, as he welcomed him eagerly, "you have had a narrow escape of your life."

"I have," replied Charles, solemnly; "they put me into a damp bed at Boulogne."

Canon Bernard Smith relates that the one study Charles Reade devoted himself to with passionate energy during his undergraduate career was paradox. That may account for this glib rejoinder.

As a matter of fact his life was in danger,

and from something far more dangerous than damp. He was lodging over a barber's shop in close proximity to one of the barricades where the fighting was fiercest, and had the barber dropped the faintest hint that an Englishman was concealed on his premises, the wild beasts of the pavement, with the blood-instinct hot upon them, would have dragged him forth to torture and death. The barber, however, was his very staunch friend. When he persisted in going out to catch a glimpse of the fun, that excellent Figaro insisted on lending him a blouse by way of *ægis*. In that guise he passed easily for a Republican, but saw enough in two days to cure him of Paris for ever.

The Garde Municipale, loyal to the core, fought like heroes to stem the tide of revolution—to no purpose. Against them *en revanche* the whole storm of popular fury burst. At first it appeared as though order would be restored, but the barricades rose as by magic. A cab or waggon was upset across the road. Then the paving stones were ripped up by a thousand hands, the neighbouring houses looted of their furniture, and, *presto*, the

mounds they formed were guarded by blouse-clad *ouvriers*, some with fire-arms, others with swords and crowbars. Against them the *Garde* charged with varying fortune. If they broke through, the mob dispersed right and left, only, however, to re-assemble as soon as the chance offered. The friendly barber shouldered a musket and fired with the rest on the *Garde*, till at last victory declared for the mob; and then commenced those scenes of barbarity which caused the blood of the English gentleman witnessing them to run cold. They, the mob, broke the *Garde*, and took them in detail, the worst fate being reserved for those who surrendered. Three of these brave citizen soldiers were burnt alive. Charles Reade saw them pile the pyre around them and light it, the while they danced and yelled the *carmagnole*. For the mob was drunk not merely with blood, but with ardent spirits and wine, the women being even more brutal than the men. A fourth member of the *Garde* was dragged in front of the barricade to suffer the same fate, when, fortunately for him, a citizen recognized his face as that of a friend, tore the blouse from

off his own back, rushed madly forward, and flung it over the head and shoulders of the doomed man, crying aloud, as the terror-stricken *garde* suffered himself to be thus clad, that he was now a citizen. Incredible as it may read, it is none the less true—*teste* Charles Reade—that this mad, murderous mob burst into tears, and fell to kissing the *garde* whom but for this meaningless incident they would have ruthlessly murdered. He was verily plucked as a brand from the burning.

A little of this experience went a long way with an adventurer not wholly destitute of common-sense. At that crisis a Red Republic was a possibility; a government wielding an executive a bare probability. Under such conditions Paris became metamorphosed into a paradise of terror, and it needed but the whisper of a chattering or malicious tongue to doom to death the young Briton in the blouse, for that pallium, though for a citizen little short of miraculous, on the back of an alien, and that alien a child of perfidious Albion, would have been regarded as a paltry fraud. To escape was the problem. The friendly barber laughed at the nervousness of citizen

Charles, and possibly was loth to lose his lodger; when, however, a mob raving with blood and brandy took to incendiarism *pour s'amuser*, Monsieur Figaro admitted reluctantly that things had got to be a little unsettled, and agreed to facilitate his lodger's exit. A cab was prevailed on to stop opposite the door in the dead of night. Into it Charles Reade was bundled, and at once crouched beneath a truss of straw. The driver's orders were to crawl as though he was returning with his straw to his stables, in order to avoid suspicion. This programme was carried through to the letter, and after a series of hair-breadth escapes Charles Reade astonished and delighted his relatives by producing a whole skin, though one unshaven and unkempt. He left behind him a score of valuable fiddles and some pictures, together with an extensive wardrobe, a portion whereof only he was enabled to recover.

In this year, 1848, he spent a longer time than was his wont at Ipsden. His father had almost lost his sight, and deprived of the field sports which had been his employment through life, rapidly developed acute depression of spirits. The picturesque old gentleman, with

hair white as the riven snow, and features statuesque in their chiselling, used to roam his grounds all day leaning on the arm of his valet, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

He fancied he was ruined.

Oddly enough, ten miles only from Ipsden at that very moment, a millionnaire, who had travelled up to London in a waggon without so much as the typical shilling, and amassed a fortune in comparison with which the rent-roll of Ipsden was a pittance, had to be humoured by the dole of a pauper. They gave him his out-door relief every Saturday, and he took it in blissful ignorance that he was the owner of some three millions of money.

The poor old Squire of Ipsden's illusion never reached to that extent, but he was none the less persuaded that ruin had overtaken him, and his son Charles was requisitioned to try every expedient in order to ward off the pitiable tears and moans.

In his youth the Squire had been fond of whist. The strict *régime* of Messieurs Faber and Fry voted all sorts of games of chance anathema, and for some fifty odd years a card had not been visible in Ipsden House. The

medical men, however, prescribed amusement as the sole palliative, and with great reluctance Mrs. Reade assented to son Charles producing a pack of the devil's pictures. His motive was filial and humane, but the devoted son must have wished ere long that he had hearkened to the voice of his mother. It soon came to this: either the Squire must be kept going at whist from breakfast to luncheon, from luncheon to dinner, and so on till bed-time, or else he would give way to low spirits, and that to an alarming extent. Charles Reade in his latter days became as great a devotee of whist as his sire, but this arrangement amounted to servitude. Friends of the family were invited to visit Ipsden simply to take a hand at the everlasting whist table.*

* On one occasion the eldest surviving son, who, though sobered by age, still enjoyed a practical joke, created by a simple trick the most profound amazement in the minds of the three other persons, his mother, father, and sister, who with himself were sitting at the whist table. Making some excuse that the cards were mislaid he went in search of them, and having found them, his sire being the dealer, volunteered to deal for him. Hearts were trumps. Each player took up his hand, when a loud exclamation was heard from the squire. "Good gracious," he said, "I have got all trumps." "And I," excitedly cried his wife, "have all

Whatever difference may have temporarily separated father and son in the past, there can be no doubt but that at this crisis Charles Reade played a dutiful, and indeed devoted part. Moreover, it so happened that his sister Ellinor at the moment was exerting all her influence to build a new church at Stoke Row, a lonely hamlet in the centre of the beech-woods on the summit of the Chilterns, a portion whereof belonged to her father, who gave the site for church and parsonage. Mrs. Reade felt it incumbent upon her to dose the bodies of the poor on her husband's estate, while her daughter exercised a similar care for their souls, and the project of a church for heathen Stoke Row fired her enthusiasm. The era of excessive church-building had not yet set in, so that what with Oxford and Cambridge, the

spades." "And I," shouted William, "have nothing but clubs." "And here are all the diamonds," said Ellinor. Not for a moment was a trick suspected. The miracle, as it appeared to the players, created the most profound surprise, not to say a feeling with three of the number of uneasiness; the fourth remained stolidly staring at the cards, which by common consent were put away for that afternoon. The amazement was too profound to permit of the game being played, nor did the culprit ever confess. Long afterwards the wonderful occurrence formed the topic of conversation.

Church and the World, her task was not quite superhuman. It necessitated, nevertheless, a mountain of hard work; and certain it is, that if Charles Reade had as yet cherished any dream of authorship, it would have been placed in abeyance. He was, however, then leading a homely and domestic existence, the general utility man of the family circle, whist-player, begging-letter writer, and game provider, not to mention companion to his nephews during their holidays, and to their sisters at other times.

At last the ecclesiastical business was settled, and he shall tell the story himself in his letter to brother Edward at Benares.

"DEAR EDWARD,

"I have long promised myself the pleasure of relating to you the events of which our house and neighbourhood have lately been the scene—events interesting to all right-thinking persons, but to none more than yourself, who are acquainted with the natural beauties of our wood-girdled hamlets, and the moral degradation which, alas! has hitherto disfigured them.

"You are aware what difficulties have been encountered. First, a considerable sum was to be raised for the building of a church; and this, through the kindness and zeal of Christian friends, was our least impediment.

"Next, the endowment was to be obtained partly from the College of St. John's, Cambridge, holding the great tithes of the parish, and partly from surplus subscriptions, aided by a liberal provision, for which our excellent vicar, the Rev. R. Twopeny, is to be thanked; and I am sorry to say we encountered in the College a wearisome obstacle.

"All this arranged, our Bishop declined to consecrate the new church until a curate should be found ready at once to undertake its service.

"I fear we did not at first appreciate our diocesan's wisdom in making this stipulation; but now we humbly confess our error.

"This last hindrance was not so easily removed as we hoped, as you yourself might have anticipated.

"The secluded situation of Stoke Row—the circumstance of there being no house for the clergyman—and no water fit for use within a distance of several miles.

"These disadvantages, added to the smallness of the stipend, no doubt deterred many of those whose zeal languishes without the allurements of what is called society, and is incapable of dispensing with earthly luxuries.

"At last, however, one was found willing to labour in this new vineyard, upon such terms as it offered, a gentleman and scholar, indifferent to society of rich or poor, and content to divide his time between the doctors of the Church and its services. His name is Cole.

"This was duly notified to the Bishop of Oxford, and after some few changes the consecration was finally fixed for Tuesday, the 19th October, 1848.

"As the Bishop, the Archdeacons of Berks and Oxford, and other personages were to be entertained and sleep, on Monday, at Ipsden, considerable preparation, you may suppose, was necessary. My gun was put in requisition, nor was Covent Garden neglected. My father alone remained discontented with our efforts, on the ground of a falling off in our butter, which used to be excellent, nor could he be brought to believe that a Bishop could put up

with butter so inferior to what he, by his position, must be accustomed to.

"The solicitude after all was superfluous. The Bishop does not eat butter.

"Our guests were all assembled on the Monday evening, when the Bishop arrived in exact time. He made a hasty toilet, and immediately reappeared.

"He had not brushed his hair. We understand it is not his custom.

"We were at opposite ends of the dinner-table—the Bishop and I. It was my fate to lead out Lady Catherine Berens. At the Bishop's end of the table the conversation was as lively as it was dull where I was.

"Dr. Wilberforce's high and earnest tone in the pulpit, and his deep fervour, whenever a religious subject, always welcome, is started, would hardly prepare a common observer for his ordinary conversation, the characteristic of which is decidedly humorous. I wish my situation had permitted me to bring away some of those sprightly sallies with which he entertained the ladies at his end of the table.

"Tuesday, a quarter-past eleven a.m., our cavalcade started for the new church. The

Bishop, some time after the rest, led by me and Mr. Pearson in my pony gig, arrived on Stoke Row Common. We saw a very pretty sight, all the country people collected in their gayest colours round the edifice. The church, which is small, was entirely filled with visitors, after which a form was introduced, capable of accommodating a dozen more of the inhabitants. They, however, preferred watching the vehicles outside.

"The musical part of the service was provided by Mr. Benfield, of Reading, his daughters, and dependants, and was done in a pure and simple style. The Bishop preached an excellent discourse. I wish I could give you some idea of his eloquence and impressive delivery of sacred truths, uttered in their full breadth without any mincing of the matter. My perverse memory retains rhetorical flowers, when the root was better bringing away.

"He illustrated the difference between professing and true Christians in the difference between dead things and living.

"'These people,' said he, 'go through religious appearances from custom, because it is the fashion, because respectable people in their

line of life all do it—dead things go with the stream, but living things go by a course of their own, now with, now against, the stream.' Then he compared the former characters to stones, on whom, perhaps, the gospel sun shines for a while, the warmth dies away, and they are colder than the very ground which surrounds them. How unlike those living things, the fruits and flowers, which absorb these beams, and give them back in beauty and perfume!

"Then he depicted a certain empty religion, of which, after describing its pretensions, he pronounced 'it shrinks at singularity, faints under a laugh, and dies under the Cross.'

"In short, to make a singular observation, the sermon ended too soon.

"On the termination of the service, I went to make sure the musicians were being taken care of. I found them very hungry, sitting round a table, gazing on vacancy. I left them with the cheerless horizon broken by a fillet of veal, a gigantic ham, and a cake, on which the table might have been set, instead of it on the table. These provisions were kept in abeyance for the clergy, on whose charity I knew I could presume.

"I need not describe our return, it was conducted in the same order we came.

"The Bishop dined with Mr. Twopeny at the vicarage, returning thence to our house to sleep. Unfortunately, his coachman, to save himself trouble, prevailed on ours (James Hutt) to go for his lordship to the vicarage. When the carriage was announced, the Bishop was engaged in interesting conversation, and did not move. So after a few minutes, Mr. Twopeny's dolt of a man-servant came again to him.

"Dolt. 'Mr. Reade's horses are waiting, sir.'

"Bishop. 'I think you must be mistaken, doubtless my horses are waiting.'

'Dolt. 'No! no! I tell'ee, it's Mr. Reade's carriage and horses as be waiting.'

"So the prelate was actually bundled off, against his will, and having arrived, told us the tale in his dramatic way.

"Of course we were shocked that he should have thought of deferring so much to our horses.

"Whereupon he reminded my mother, that he had been admonished twenty years ago, when curate of Checkenden, that he was not to keep the Ipsden horses waiting!

"Thus the grave events of the period were diversified by incidents of a lighter character."

This letter, it must be remembered, was addressed to a brother on whom he had not set eyes for twenty years. Mr. Edward A. Reade at that time was Commissioner of Benares, and one of the warmest supporters of Evangelical Missions in the province of Bengal. From Benares he was transferred afterwards to Agra, where, as a senior member of the Sudder Board, and acting Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces during the Mutiny, he rendered such signal service to India and its European denizens as to have honestly merited promotion. Instead, he was passed over in favour of his junior, who had been out of harm's way at Calcutta. This job on the part of Lord Canning was apologized for on the plea that Mr. Edward A. Reade, though the warm friend of both the Lawrences, and held in the highest estimation by the native princes, whose loyalty his personal influence secured, was nick-named "Primitive" on account of incapacity. There never was a grosser slander. He was dubbed "Primitive"

because of his supposed affinity with Methodism, albeit really he was an attached Anglican of the Low-Church type. In addressing a brother whose belief was so pronounced as to have afterwards virtually robbed him of the reward earned by unostentatious heroism, Charles Reade adopted, let us say diplomatically, a tone calculated to win his sympathy. When, in later life, he reverted to the views which coloured his boyhood, if not his young manhood, his pen often flowed much in the same strain; and the theatrical acquaintance who accused him of religious melancholia would be surprised possibly to perceive the similarity between his style of 1848 and that of 1881. In the former year, at all events, he was free from melancholia, yet he writes as one in harmony with Christianity. It is surely not necessary for a man to be a lunatic in order to be a believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the assumption that Charles Reade lost his head when he regained his conscience is one which, on the ground of its impudence alone, arouses our just indignation.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. SEYMOUR.

We are now approaching the period when Charles Reade first essayed authorship. He had been a great, because a wide, reader, and the habit of assimilation and rapid, though close, observation was destined to stand him in good stead. Like almost every author who has attained celebrity, he began by sowing a large crop of literary wild oats. He believed himself to be a dramatist born, and at the outset his thoughts focussed themselves entirely on the stage. It seldom seems to have occurred to him to essay fiction, albeit he conceived himself capable of excelling in criticism should he ever attempt to exercise that dormant faculty. There was at the time little to encourage the playwright. There were, comparatively speaking, but few play-houses, and those

few in the hands of a small clique. A good novel commanded a high price, whereas a successful play yielded but a slender return to the author who could not afford to back his own venture. Charles Reade, however, thirsted not so much for gold as for fame. True, his essentially unpractical nature and rather expensive tastes had already dipped into his Fellowship, and money was really a superior consideration to one whose reversionary interest at that time was not expected to exceed two thousand pounds, for he had received from his father already nearly half a younger son's portion.

No man, however, suffered less from the *auri sacra fames;* none was less mercenary. His ambition was pure. Give him fame. Let the dullards of the common-room and the heavy respectabilities of Ipsden learn that he could by an effort rise far above their level. Let the mighty world of two hemispheres own him as one of its true aristocracy. That was the man's aim, and he directed all his efforts towards it. He wrote play after play with the pen of the amateur, yet each one rising above its predecessor, and none devoid of some scintillae of brilliance. Three years he toiled

along the weary road of failure, still cherishing a belief in himself, still preserving a heart of grace, yet encountering disappointments such as would have crushed a weaker nature. Worse still, as his MSS. proved sterile, in like proportion his creditors grew importunate. Oftentimes he was harried across the Channel to await the Bursar's cheque which should enable him to return home; yet oftener he buried himself in dingy courts and alleys to escape the attentions of Mr. Sloman.

At the close of 1849 his fine old sire paid the debt of nature. His eldest surviving son, the new Squire, pressed his mother still to occupy the old home where she had been mistress for fifty-five years, and she remained at Ipsden House until 1852. During these years Charles was a constant visitor at Ipsden, and when he confided to a fond mother his pecuniary difficulties, that generous-hearted woman at once permitted him to anticipate the sum he would have to receive under her marriage settlement at her death. He rewarded, it may be added, her confidence by regularly paying interest.

This, however, served but as a stop-gap.

His Fellowship of Magdalen yielded little more than £250 nett, per annum, and the Vinerian Fellowship about £80. He had every incentive to labour, and as the months rolled on his toil redoubled, so much so, that under the strain of mental work and disquiet his health gave way, not indeed seriously, for he was naturally robust and muscular, yet sufficiently to augment the difficulties of his position. It was the managers of theatres, who could not be persuaded to accept his maiden dramas, that in the main caused the mischief. Stupid people can persevere without belief in themselves; genius never loses faith in itself till after repeated rebuffs, but when first it begins to suspect that its confidence may be misplaced, it succumbs, not under disillusion, but rather under a keen sense of injustice. These years of waiting for the dawn of hope aged and soured one who had retained the freshness and sweetness of boyhood into middle life. He complained bitterly of the absence of sympathy; for which he yearned as the parched land for the summer's rain.

He found it, at last, perhaps where least he could have expected it.

At the Haymarket Theatre there was playing, under the auspices of Mr. Buckstone, a distinguished comedian, Mrs. Seymour. She was magnanimous and appreciative, and, like many women of her calibre, could recognize the difference between a real and a sham gentleman. Ladies whom the voice of scandal has spared have been less warm-hearted and charitable than one whom the world knocked about, and who none the less gave back some positive good for the evil she received. Had her father never drifted to London from Somersetshire, she would have made a superlative farmer's wife and market-woman. As it was, she passed through the dark furnace of London life, and emerged from it a brave and benevolent woman.

Mrs. Seymour never was an actress of the very highest rank. She had brains; she was brimful of the dramatic instinct, and played up to a certain level. She met Charles Reade when she was at her zenith. She was taking the lead at the Haymarket, was well-looking off the stage, and could make up pretty, though her figure had become matronly. She was in receipt of a good weekly salary; she knew

every one who was any one in the land of Bohemia, and, in short, her influence far transcended that of many an eminent author, and of not a few lessees and managers.

It chanced one night that Charles Reade saw this lady play. Even in his earlier years he always had a slight tendency to deafness, and Mrs. Seymour's ringing tones saved him the trouble of listening with an effort. At once he mentally appraised her as a great actress, a verdict not universally endorsed, though undoubtedly she rose in suitable parts above mediocrity.

Besides her voice, he admired her *vif* manner, acquaintance with the stage, and physique. Tastes happily differ, and if everybody failed to share his unbounded admiration of the actress, he was by no means her sole admirer. It may, however, be safely predicted that he stood alone in believing her to be a really great artist. Yet it was to her as such that he went back to his chambers and addressed a letter.

In this epistle he was direct rather than effusive. Hinting broadly his appreciation, he nevertheless kept close to the point, which

was personal. He wished her to give him an interview, in order to read a passage from a play he had commenced. The response was in the affirmative. Mrs. Seymour would see Mr. Charles Reade.

He called accordingly, hat in hand. He had been snubbed all along the line by people of her craft, including Buckstone, Webster, and the rest of the theatrical set. It was with diffidence that he approached her, perhaps with a tinge of melancholy.

He read her a scene from an unfinished drama. She listened as middle-aged women do, who have been bored perpetually by authors; not exactly with interest, yet not altogether frigidly.

"Yes," she cried, when he concluded, "that's good! That's plotting. But," with a merry stage laugh, which had become natural to her, "why don't you write novels?"

If she had uttered a coarse malediction, Charles Reade could have born it stoically. This suggestion that he had better try another line cut him to the quick.

"I am trespassing on your time," he said, rising hastily.

"Oh, no. Pray go on."

But he had heard enough. Politely, and without any show of the offence he felt, he bowed himself out.

Whatever else she had learnt, or omitted to learn, Mrs. Seymour, at all events, knew the male sex by heart. A glance at the pale face of the tall man, who barely touched the tip of her fingers as he left the room, told her that he was disappointed. She was essentially good-natured. She felt sorry. Besides, he was a fine man, with the *bel* air of one accustomed to society.

"Hard up, I suppose," she muttered, "like the rest of them. Wanted me to buy his play for an old song, no doubt—but of course that's absurd. Still, I don't like to see a fellow of his sort down on his luck, and I'll tell him as much."

She was no more in love with Charles Reade than he with her; perhaps it is no libel upon her to affirm that she was quite beyond falling in love with any man. She could feel as a friend for man or woman, not as a lover; indeed, to place her idiosyncrasies in their true light, we may anticipate the course of events so far as to state, that some twenty years later

she said, "I hope Mr. Reade will never ask me to marry him, as I should certainly refuse." This after they had been friends and theatrical partners for so long.

To revert to our narrative. This kind-hearted woman, whose conscience accused her of meanness, sat down and indited a downright blundering but most considerate letter. She began by expressing her regret that a gentleman of his obvious birth and breeding should be out of spirits on the score of money; adding that while, as a matter of business, she could not make him an offer for his play, she begged he would accept the loan of five pounds (bank-note enclosed). A lady of her sort would not unnaturally connect sad looks with empty pockets, and never for a second suspect that it was baffled ambition which blanched Charles Reade's cheek, rather than the want of bank-notes. She was soon to be disillusioned.

Her letter affected its recipient profoundly. He knew how thoroughly she had misread him, but readily pardoned the error in consideration of the sympathy her act evidenced so demonstratively. This time he would not wait

for an appointment, but called with her bank-note in his hand.

"No," said he, his words expressing an emotion he very rarely betrayed, "that is not what I need. But you have unintentionally supplied it."

What passed at that interview is not known. Each had learnt in a moment to respect the other, and we may be sure that a friendship thus commenced was from the outset regarded as sacred. It had, moreover, to develope. They were as yet strangers; and if Mrs. Seymour found for the first time a man of genius who cared neither for money nor love, but coveted fame and friendship, celebrity and sympathy, Charles Reade was equally charmed by at last discovering a woman who could understand his motives and ambitions, and was ready to give him what he sorely needed, the first step on the ladder.

It must, moreover, be categorically asserted, on the individual authority of the late Mr. Winwood Reade, who was a constant inmate subsequently of their house in Bolton Row, that the friendship between these two was platonic. Mr. Winwood Reade was an avowed

atheist, the bitterest enemy of Christianity of his age, a man who, on philosophic grounds, despised morality. He would have treated a *liaison* between his uncle and Mrs. Seymour, not merely as a matter of course, but as derogatory to neither. Yet it is a fact, that he went out of his way to assure some of those who were most deeply interested in the former of his positive conviction that their relations were those of friends only. And although Mr. Winwood Reade's views were otherwise devoid of principle or belief, he was truthful invariably, and on matters of fact worthy of credit.

It is all the more needful *in limine* to insist on this, because if Charles Reade's partnership with a practical woman of the world was of the nature of a morganatic marriage, their lives were a brazen fraud. For there was no concealment, no dove-cote in St. John's Wood, or other expedient to avoid the gaze of the world; on the contrary, the author introduced the actress to his family as the lady who kept house for him. He took her to Oxford, and invited his College to meet her on the same footing. He would have punished the

man who dared insinuate that Mrs. Seymour was his mistress. Nay more, she was perfectly free to wed whom she would after the death of her husband; and he equally free, after that he had amassed fortune sufficient to have enabled him to dispense with his Fellowship. Neither did marry. The link remained unbroken to the end. "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*"

From a literary point of view Mrs. Seymour's five-pound note proved the nucleus of fortune and of fame. It converted her into his fast friend, and her wit, never at a loss for an expedient, assisted him at every turn. She was the architect of his fortune, if not of his reputation.

Just previous to his first acquaintance with this lady he had formed a sort of literary combination with the late Mr. Tom Taylor, a Cambridge man, and a successful playwright. The Reade and Taylor alliance commenced with 'A Ladies' Battle'—a singularly awkward translation of a singularly pat title. The play, however, as adapted for the British public by these authors, achieved something more than a *succès d'éstime*, being on the lines of drawing-room comedy, an art as yet uninvented.

An industrious, on the average, yet occasionally desultory writer, an unpractical and unmethodical man in his private habits, Charles Reade began diaries, to break them off abruptly, and leave a hiatus of years. Fortunately, at this intermediate stage of his career, when he was collaborating as an obscurity with a celebrity, he jotted down a record of his sensations. It is fragmentary, spasmodic, and careless, but, notwithstanding, affords a fair index of his mental state. We append the following extracts:

"*Ipsden House, Wallingford, May* 7, 1852. I am so ill in mind and body that I have resolved to go to Malvern.

"*Bellevue Hotel, Malvern.* What is more horrible than being alone in a strange place at an inn, and it raining?

"Then the doctors are like Eastern princes. Dr. Gully, I am told, receives no visits after noon. So I am to take mine ease in mine inn till to-morrow.

"*May* 18. On the look-out for characters. There is in Dr. Gully's establishment a gentleman, a very wealthy man, who leaves home

and immures himself *chez* Gully, and deserts all family connections. Why? He says because he eats too much pudding at home, and makes himself ill. So far so good. But here comes an inconsistency. He eats too much pudding *chez* Gully, and makes himself ill in this temple of health. Now if a man's bowels *are* to go wrong, why not in the bosom of his family? I wish somebody would explain this to me. He worries me. I don't see it, and I loathe the unintelligible. But is this a character? or *tout bonnement un âne?*

"*June* 7, *Malvern.* I have now been a month in this place, and were I to call it a month stolen from my life, it would not be far from the truth.

"It has been a month of *ennui* and utter collapse of bodily and mental power. Mine is a nature that requires some *little* amusement, and also the sound of some little human sentiment. Deprived of these for so many dreary days, solitary and cheerless, my mind is collapsing, and will go unless I save myself by flight.

"I came here to work! What have I done? I have written in these thirty days

ten pages of a novel; I have lost health, time, and digestion. But it serves me right! I knew beforehand I could not write a novel in a dungeon. I shall certainly run off one of these days. To Paris? Anywhere; and wash the taste of this dead sea out of my soul.

"Such is the result of a month filched from my short life in this wretched place.

"*June* 17. Forty days, constant wind, so that I have not been able to sit one half-hour in the air. No acquaintance with a grain of feeling or brains, and I cannot stand dolts or fleshy statues.

"Took what they call a lamp-bath the other day. I was to perspire. No such thing. Fainted instead. More refined, but less agreeable.

"*June* 24. How hard it is to find a horse that it is a *pleasure* to ride, as rare as a play that does not yawn you, or a woman that does not deceive you. For all that, I have found a black mare whose paces are delicious. Like all watering-place hacks, she is safer galloping down hill than walking.

"Read Vol. I. of 'Pendennis'—an imitation of Fielding.

"I hear ——— is thinking of taking the Olympic Theatre. If he does he will keep it from becoming a dead letter to us authors, and consequently to the public, who find novelty at every other place that professes to unyawn them. Here they have got nothing hitherto but raw meat and cold cabbage.

"How ludicrous is the *amour-propre* of English actors. And their notion that no author knows the meaning of his own words! A play of mine loses so enormously when not rehearsed by me, that I fear I shall always torment them for the sake of my own credit. What a difference there was in the 'Ladies' Battle,' brought out at a second-rate theatre under my rehearsal, and at a first-rate theatre under Leigh Murray's. I have long ago made up my mind to give actors and actresses my views in private, and interrupt as little as may be upon the stage at rehearsal.

"Actors, however, that is to say, English actors—for French actors esteem every word an author says about his own work a favour—are a little unjust, a little obscure in their judgment on this point. I, for instance, do not teach them acting or speaking. I don't

teach my actors to speak Shakespeare or Mark Lemon, I simply teach them how to give my meaning to my words, and every competent dramatic author, however small a one, can do this. He cannot speak beautifully, as actors ought, but he can give the exact point of every sentence in his work, and the actor's business is to tune those words, and point, and tone, and dilate, and beautify them. This is done by Mrs. Stirling in the long soliloquy, 'Ladies' Battle,' and was done all through the play.

"Amongst the numerous fallacies of the stage is this. That if A learns something from B, in that case B can't learn anything from A. Nonsense. No actor ever plays a part without my learning something from him. Why? Because I am not an ass. And no *great* actor ever hears me read my work without learning something from me. Why? Because great actors are not asses.

"The great always learn more from the little than the little from the great."

This last paragraph breathes the spirit and temper which subsequently found vent in 'The Eighth Commandment.' His heart always

turned towards the stage. It was more than a hobby, a consuming passion, and the unsympathetic atmosphere of Malvern caused him to revert entirely to London and his work in the world.

The next entry in his diary has a special value of its own. It is stated—albeit we have not been able to verify the allegation—that in America 'Masks and Faces' is invariably announced as by Tom Taylor. As originally produced in England it was by Tom Taylor and Charles Reade, and the former gained the lion's share of the credit. In its latest revival under Mrs. Bancroft, we have it, on the authority of Charles Reade himself, that "oddly enough"—his *verba verberrima*—"not one single line of Tom Taylor survived;" every line was Charles Reade's.

Bearing in mind that this was the first creation of his prolific genius, and one worthy to rank side by side with the dramas of Goldsmith and Sheridan, being, in fact, *an English classic* of the highest merit, it is all-important that its authorship should be defined. The following indicates approximately the exact share Tom Taylor had in the

play as originally produced. Even that share was whittled down, while in the long run, if Charles Reade be a witness of truth, it was eliminated altogether. However, this tells the tale:

"*June* 7. Dramatic annoyances have found me out even here. My *collaborateur*, Taylor, has written a new *dénouement*, and without submitting it to me has read it to the Haymarket Company. This has hurt my *amour propre*, and a nobler feeling of creative paternity. The end of a play is all-important, and I feel that Woffington, who is entirely mine, ought at least to have been subject to my brush down to the last. What is the history of this play? I wrote a certain scene in which Triplet, whose broad outlines I then and there drew, figured; and another personation scene containing Peg Woffington, Colley Cibber, James Quin. I showed these to Taylor as scenes. He liked these two characters, and we agreed to write a comedy.

"I began. I wrote the greater part of Act I., and sketched situations of second act, viz. the company assembled in Mr. Vane's

house, and Mrs. Vane's sudden appearance, Mrs. Vane's kindness to Triplet—a mere sketch; and in Triplet's house the first picture scene almost as it stands now; and I wrote a little of a third act. Well, Taylor came down to me, added to my first act, filled up the chinks, got Vane into a better position, and made the first act an act.

"I think it lay idle six months. He then went to work and treated the rest in the same way. So that at this period he was author of two-thirds of the play, so far as sentences went. He was satisfied with it, and read it to Mrs. Stirling, who turned her back on him and said plump, 'It won't do.' Full stop for a month or two. Then he wrote to me, and I took the bull by the horns. Flung Act I. into the fire and wrote a new act, dashing at once into the main story. I took his cold stage creation, Pomander, and put alcohol into him, and on the plan of the great French dramatists, I made the plot work by a constant close battle between a man and a woman. I then took in hand Act II., and slashed through Taylor's verboseness, losing none of his beauties, and he has some pretty things

in that act. Then I came to Act III., where I found my own picture-scene wanted little alteration. Then, with the help of a speech or two of Mabel's, as sweet as honey (Taylor's), I softened Woffington so that she cried in the frame, and Mabel found her out.

"Then I offered the MS. to Taylor. He did not like the fence-and-rail prepared for him, and he said, 'You reconcile the two women, and I'll go on.' Well, I did so, and I was not sorry to stop, for I was working in a high key, and did not see my way to sustain it through a mist of stagy manœuvres that I saw ahead. However, while at Paris I did actually finish the play on thin paper, and sent it to my *collaborateur*.

"Taylor did not like my *dénouement*. He altered it, and read his to Webster, who did not like it. He has altered it again, and so the matter stands.*

* The following communication from Mr. Arnold Taylor of the Local Government Board throws additional light on the genesis of 'Masks and Faces':

"Charles Reade and Tom Taylor first became acquainted in the winter of 1850-51, or spring of 1851. 'Twas on this wise: Mrs. Stirling had put into Tom Taylor's hands Reade's play of 'Christie Johnstone,' and told the former who and what the author of the play was.

"*June* 10. I have consented to let 'Masks and Faces' be brought out altered to please

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My brother brought the play home with him to the Temple, where I lived with him and the late Cuthbert Ellison, from August 1850 to August 1851. Hence my ability to fix the dates above given. Ellison and I were going to bed, when my brother came in and said, 'Stop; I want to read you a play by an Oxford man, one Charles Reade, about whom Mrs. Stirling has been talking to me.'

"We listened to the play with great interest, and my brother warmly praised certain parts of it, adding, however, 'It is utterly unsuited for the stage, and so I shall tell Mrs. Stirling when I return her the MS.'

"The verdict was a sad disappointment to Charles Reade, but he accepted it, and subsequently published the story as a one-volume novel, in which the original dramatic form is visible throughout.

"The above incident led to the subsequent intimacy of Reade and Taylor, the introduction being made through Mrs. Stirling. We saw him from time to time at our chambers, 3, Fig-Tree Court, Temple, and his great desire then was to write a play in collaboration with my brother.

"In 1851 or 1852 he had the idea of a play founded on Peg Woffington, and I have the authority of my brother's assertion, often repeated in my own hearing and that of others, who can corroborate me, that when Charles Reade came to him on the subject, he had one character, and a bit of one scene, together with some vague, crude ideas how the play was to be worked into shape.

"In August 1851 my mother, brother, and others of my family went to live at Chiswick, and it was there that the play of 'Masks and Faces' was written, not entirely, but mainly in the form in which it was first acted.

"It was first played at the Haymarket in November,

Webster, who is not so good a writer as an actor.

1852. I conclude, therefore, that the play must have been written at Chiswick, in the summer or autumn of that year.

"Any way, Charles Reade was our guest at Chiswick Lodge, and the method of writing the play was this, that during the day (my brother being in Town at his office) Charles Reade wrote long passages, which were as ruthlessly cut to pieces or rejected at night by my brother, when they sat down together to put together and complete their work. And morning after morning, as I well remember, when we were at breakfast, Charles Reade used, half in sorrow, half in fun, to say to my mother, 'There, Mrs. Taylor, my gentleman has been at his old game. He has cut out every line of that dialogue, and all those sentiments you so much admired when I read them to you yesterday afternoon.'

"In this way the writing of the play went on till its completion in three acts. Amongst my brother's MSS. I have found a fair copy, made by myself for the authors, of *an* act No. 1. In this fair copy, corrected subsequently in my brother's hand-writing, as the MS. shows, there is a great deal wholly omitted from the play as acted, but a great deal which was subsequently introduced by Charles Reade into his one-volume novel of 'Peg Woffington.'

"Then followed further alterations. Very much to Charles Reade's vexation, and contrary to all his ideas and wishes, the play was cut down by my brother to two acts, and worked by him into the shape in which it was finally acted at the Haymarket.

"I have abundant proofs in letters of Charles Reade, written to my brother in 1852, how much this change went against the grain with him. He even objects to

"Taylor has been talking to me of the labour of collaboration. I told him labour

certain minor characters, and the names they bear. Further, these letters contain repeated evidence that Charles Reade then fully recognized the difference between himself, an unknown author, and a successful dramatist like my brother.

The latter, however, was never slow to do the fullest justice to a fellow-workman. And, often as I have heard him mention the one character and part of one scene already alluded to, I always heard him add, 'But the beginning of the second act, the scene in the garret between Peg Woffington and Triplet and his family,—the best, I think, in the whole play,—was entirely Charles Reade's.'

"'Masks and Faces' proving a great success, Charles Reade then, without so much as naming his intention to my brother, produced the one-volume novel of 'Peg Woffington.'

"This naturally set people asking whether the play of 'Masks and Faces' or the novel of 'Peg Woffington' was written first? If the latter, all the credit of originality rested with Charles Reade, and Tom Taylor had merely been asked to use his experience as a playwright, and throw the story into dramatic form.

"My brother having remonstrated with Charles Reade on the line he had taken, the latter then prefixed to the novel the dedication, dated December 15th, 1852: 'To Tom Taylor, my friend and coadjutor in the comedy of 'Masks and Faces,' to whom the reader owes much of the best matter of this tale.'

"I find the same dedication repeated in a new edition of 'Peg Woffington,' published in 1857.

"I thought, and still think, and said so at the time to

is the condition of all excellence. Results not processes are to be regarded. I only

my brother, that the language of the dedication was not adequate to the circumstances and the facts.

"His answer, as far as I can recall it, was, 'Reade's a queer fellow, with odd notions about the rights and wrongs of things, and I'm quite willing to let the whole thing pass and be forgotten.'

"But the matter left, I think, a soreness on both sides, for it was not until April, 1854, that their second play, 'Two Loves and a Life,' was produced at the Adelphi, and their third, 'The King's Rival,' at the St. James', in October of the same year.

"Shortly after the production of 'Masks and Faces,' Charles Reade produced a play, all his own, 'Gold,' which I well remember seeing at Drury Lane.

"It is only necessary to recall that immature production to be convinced that the hand that wrote it was incapable of the terse, sparkling, and polished finish of 'Masks and Faces.'

"The play, as first produced, was, as every one knows, an immense success. It may therefore be inferred, that the cutting down the three acts to two, the changes in the scenes and incidents, the cutting out of some and the insertion of other minor characters, all done by Tom Taylor, against Charles Reade's wish or consent, as his own letters show, had much to do with the success of the play during its run at the Haymarket in 1852, and subsequently at the Adelphi.

"I therefore sum up my narrative of what is within my own knowledge by saying, that I believe Mrs. Seymour had no acquaintance with Charles Reade when 'Masks and Faces' was written by him and Tom Taylor.

"That the idea of making Peg Woffington the heroine of a play was exclusively Charles Reade's; that the

wish I could reduce collaboration to a science, that is all.

"I could write twelve halves of three act plays in a year, writing only between breakfast and luncheon; but I could not write six plays without hurting my brain.

"*July* 15. *Durham.* Made acquaintance here with a charming, clever woman, beautiful as the dawn, and madly in love with a man hideous as midnight, and not one idea in his skull. There are such women, full of talent, yet next door to idiots. Miss Chaworth utterly despised Lord Byron, and venerated a brainless boor, a snob, a beast, who leathered her with his riding-whip.

"It was not that she liked Jack, and admired George but objected to his person. She respected the Beast and despised the Man.

"*July* 20. I have written three copy-books

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shaping of the play into the form in which it was finally produced was Tom Taylor's. But that the credit of the play should be equally divided between the two authors, as each brought to the work qualities and powers peculiarly his own, the ultimate result being the production of certainly one of the very best and finished comedies of modern times.

"ARNOLD TAYLOR."

Surbiton Hill, Oct. 11, 1886.

of 'Peg Woffington,' a novel. I hope to make a decent three volume novel of it; but whether any one will publish it is another question. If not now, perhaps in three years time. Literature no doubt is a close borough.

"I am in love with Peg Woffington. She is dead, and can't sting me. I love her, and hope to make many love her.

"*Aug.* 3. *Durham.* My life is very monotonous. Nothing but old people here now. No sympathy with my pursuits. I am a most unhappy artist, to have no public and no domestic circle. Praise and sympathy are the breath of our nostrils. It is not all vanity. More than other people we are here for the sake of others, and it is crushing when no one cares for what we do. My friends have good understandings and are great readers, yet no one of them has ever expressed the least curiosity as to what I write. Yet they have the impudence to bring me trash to read in MS., in which a stiff, barren, conventional set of incidents are flung like blots upon paper, and garnished round with texts of Scripture and endless reflections.

"Wait till I get to London, and organize

a little society of painters, actors, and writers, all lovers of truth, and sworn to stand or fall together. Why not a Truth Company as well as a Gala Company?—*l'un vaut bien l'autre.* Now I think of it, there is, I believe, a company and a steam-engine for everything but truth.

"I have finished my novel, 'Peg Woffington'; I don't know whether it is good or not. I wish to Heaven *I* had a housekeeper like Molière. No man can judge his own work. I hope now to work out my *forte*, criticism. But how purposeless, hopeless, and languid I feel. On the other hand, I know that if I don't do something soon, some still more ignorant ape will fly the subject before the public, and take the bread out of my mouth. It is horrible how an idea never occurs to a single person, always to three. It is a feature of the day.

"*Aug.* 10. I have sketched the plot of an original drama; I am studying for it a little. One of my characters is to be a thief. I have the *entrée* of Durham Gaol, and I am studying thieves. I have got lots of their letters, and one or two autobiographies from the chaplain.

But the other subject, the gold-diggings, makes me very uneasy. I feel my lack of facts at every turn. On the subject I wish I had some one I could consult; but it is utter solitude here. I have no friend, no acquaintance that knows

Sound from Noise,
Bombast from Sublime,
Beauty from the Beast,
Smell from Stink,
or
H from H."

The next few sentences in the diary, at different dates, may strike the reader as being a little hysterical. They lead up, however, to a paragraph which may be termed a revelation of the method of novel-manufacture which Charles Reade invented. Few, if indeed any, among those who achieved literary fame have set themselves a task so laborious, and one necessitating such conscientious self-sacrifice. It was to the faithful following of this same hard rule that he was indebted for the magnificent success of 'It is Never too Late to Mend,' a work which, in extent of circu-

lation, rivalled that of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' and elevated its author at once to the first rank of novelists. He had already laid the foundation of his future reputation in 'Peg Woffington,' the drama of 'Masks and Faces' in novel form. He was preparing to follow it up by 'Christie Johnstone,' a book based on his own herring-fishery adventures. But these two were mere genre pictures. His *chef d'œuvre* was impending, and here, in these rough notes, he narrates how it was composed. It was a double drama, so to speak, the first part having for its *motif* the cruel nemesis of society on moral error; the second the *auri sacra fames*, which at the moment invested the Australian diggings with so weird an interest. He here narrates how he actually collected material for the former, how he proposed to obtain it for the latter.

"*Sept.* 27. *Magd. Col., Oxford.* Have nearly finished a great original play, a drama in four acts, containing the matter and characters that go to a five-act piece. I suppose I must go to London to push it.

"Mem. Not to let it go out of my hands.

Not to trust it in any theatre, because there are plenty of blackguards about, and any fool could write a play that would go down upon this subject. I am glad in one way of having written this play. I want to show people that, though I adapt French pieces, I can *invent* too, if I choose to take the trouble. And it *is* a trouble to me, I confess.

"I am divided about my plans. I think I have only two talents—dramatic and critical. Of these, the best policy seems to be to try the first, and make it lead to the second. I shall need much encouragement and sympathy to support me under the struggle. Where to find it—them?

"The head of this society enters on his 98th year to-day.

Oct. 23, *London.* Charles Reade in account with literature—

Dr.	£	s.	d.	Cr.
Pens, Paper, Ink, Copying	11	11	0	0
Brains	4000	0	0	
	4011	11	0	

"List of my unacted plays: 1. 'The Way Things Turn.' 2. 'Peregrine Pickle.'

3. 'Marguerite.' 4. 'Honour before Title.' 5. 'Masks and Faces.' 6. 'Gold.' 7. 'Nance Oldfield.' 8. 'The Dangerous Path.' 9. 'The Hypochondriac.' 10. 'Fish, Flesh, and good Red Herring.' 11. 'Rachel the Reaper.'* I don't remember the rest. I am a little soured, and no wonder.

"Just had a civil note fron Kean, inviting me to read my drama to him. This is the first bright speck in my present destiny.

"*June* 14, 1853. *Magd. Coll.* My capacity for labour seems wonderfully faint. I have scarcely written a page since 'Christie J.' Still, I ought to make a great hit with my drama 'Gold.' The very first work on modern Judaism I took up showed me just what I had calculated on in coming here, that the Jews are a people of whom we know nothing, and who know nothing about the Christian religion. Here is one of those rich veins with which a hit is to be made. If I had but patience to read, I could write the subject, I know, when I had the facts. Mem. If ever

* Dec., 1852. 'Masks and Faces' has been pretty successful. Am now writing a Scotch story, and Bentley offers to publish on the same terms as 'Peg Woffington.'

I write a novel on 'Gold,' introduce a Jew and a learned Divine (Chaplain of Tom Robinson's gaol), who meet with a holy horror of each other, battle, argue, find they were both in the dark as respects each other, and that all supposed monsters are men—no more, no less.

"*June* 17, 1853. Busy correcting proofs of 'Christie Johnstone.' Fear there is an excess of dialogue in it. I think I ought to throw some of that into narrative. Mrs. Seymour thinks there is too much criticism in it. I have no doubt there is. These are defects to me which judgment cannot correct. I lack the true oil of Fiction, and I fear she will have to inspire me, as well as reform me. The drowned fisherman's scene was admired by Kinglake and by Tennyson; but I feel how much more a thorough-bred narrator would have made of it.

"*June* 20. The plan I propose to myself in writing stories will, I see, cost me undeniable labour. I propose never to guess where I can know. For instance, Tom Robinson is in gaol. I have therefore been to Oxford Gaol and visited every inch, and shall do the

same at Reading. Having also collected material in Durham Gaol, whatever I write about Tom Robinson's gaol will therefore carry (I hope) a physical exterior of truth.

"George Fielding is going in a ship to Australia. I know next to nothing about a ship, but my brother Bill is a sailor. I have commissioned him to describe, as he would to an intelligent child, a ship sailing with the wind on her beam—then a lull—a change of wind to dead aft, and the process of making all sail upon a ship under that favourable circumstance.

"Simple as this is, it has never been done in human writing so as to be intelligible to *landsmen.*

"One of my characters is a Jew—an Oriental Jew. It will be his fate to fall into argument not only with Susan Merton but with the Chaplain of my gaol. It will be my business to show what is in the head and in the heart of a modern Jew. This entails the reading of at least eight considerable volumes; but those eight volumes read will make my Jew a Truth, please God, instead of a Lie.

"My story must cross the water to

Australia, and plunge after that into a gold mine. To be consistent with myself, I ought to cross-examine at the very least a dozen men that have farmed, dug, or robbed in that land. If I can get hold of two or three that have really been in it, I think I could win the public ear by these means. Failing these I must read books and letters, and do the best I can. Such is the mechanism of a novel by Charles Reade. I know my system is right; but unfortunately there are few men so little fitted as myself to work this system. A great capacity for labour is the first essential. Now I have a singularly small capacity for acquisitive labour. A patient, indomitable spirit the second. Here I fail miserably. A stout heart the third. My heart is womanish. A vast memory the fourth. My memory is not worth a dump.

"Now, I know exactly what I am worth. If I can work the above great system, there is enough of me to make one of the writers of the day; without it, NO, NO.

"*June* 21. *M. C.* To-day I sat out upon the lawn and scribbled six hours. There are about six days in every English summer

that one can write out of doors without the paper being blown away and writer drenched. This was one. It ended in thunder and rain.

"*June* 24. That humbug J. wants to cheat me out of my due, under cover of his leading actress. Have told him I will sue him. Think I shall tell her so too. A good thundering quarrel would stir me up out of this wretched state of stagnation, and I'm just in the humour, ready for all the world (except one), like a porcupine in cold weather.

"*June* 29. *Reading.* That wretch Bentley has not sent me the revised proofs of 'Christie Johnstone,' and I wanted to give the book to my mother on her birthday (July 7). She will be eighty, yet she went yesterday ten miles in a fly, and wandered about the woods in a pony-gig besides.

"*July* 8. *Magd. Coll.* Spent several hours in Reading Gaol yesterday. I hope that tree will bear fruits.

"There was one gaol-bird reading the Bible in Hebrew.

"*July* 10. Went to hear the assize sermon and see the judges. Awful to behold. Going

to the criminal court to-morrow. I made myself cry to-day writing a bit of my story, 'Never too Late to Mend.' Is that a good sign? Laura Seymour says I have pathos. I suspect I shall be the only one to snivel.

"*July* 17. Went to-day to the chapel of Reading Gaol. There I heard and saw a parson drone the liturgy, and hum a commonplace dry-as-dust discourse to two hundred great culprits and beginners.

"Most of those men's lives have been full of stirring and thrilling adventures. They are now by the mighty force of a system arrested in their course, and for two whole hours to-day were chained under a pump, which ought to pump words of fire into their souls; but this pump of a parson could not do his small share —so easy compared with what the police and others had done in tracking and nabbing these two hundred foxes one at a time. No, the clerical pump could not pump, or would not.

"He droned away as if he had been in a country parish church. He attacked the difficult souls with a buzz of conventional commonplaces, that have come down from book of

sermons to book of sermons for the last century; but never in that century knocked at the door of a man in passing—nor ever will.

"The beetle's drowsy hum!!!

"Well, I'm not a parson; but I'll write one, and say a few words in my quiet, temperate way about this sort of thing.

"But la! it doesn't become me to complain of others. Look at myself. Can't write 'Never too Late to Mend,' which is *my business.*

"*Aug.* 22. *London.* Tom Taylor has made me over his chambers. They are in a healthier part than Covent Garden, and I feel as if I could set to work. My plans. I will work hard at my tale of 'Gold,' whether under that title or another. I will hunt up two men who have lived in Australia, and are very communicative; from them I will get real warm facts. I will visit all the London prisons, and get warm facts from them for the Robinson business. I will finish the 'Box Tunnel' for Bentley's 'Miscellany.' I will write plays with Tom Taylor—his exuberance makes it easy. I will prepare for publication a series of stories

under one title. I will play steadily for hits. I will not be worse than the public—or not too much so. I will write better than 'Christie Johnstone.' The story there is dry and husky. I will live moderately. I will take decisive measures for being out of bed at eight."

CHAPTER XVI.

VICE-PRESIDENT.

THE year 1851 brought Charles Reade to Oxford. It was his turn to act as Vice-President, and there were many reasons why he should hesitate before declining that honourable post. First, it would add at least £100 to his pocket-money, besides diminishing the cost of living to a merely nominal sum. Secondly, he would have a Demyship to give to one of his nephews. And thirdly, the year was one of critical importance both to the College and its individual Fellows. Lord John Russell's Commission had descended on Magdalen like the wolf on the fold, and though President Routh sent a defiant reply to the Queen's Commissioners, to the effect that he declined to render an account of

revenues he was not conscious of having misused, the sober spirits of the College recognized the advisability of coming to terms with the enemy. There was a general desire that Charles Reade should act as their second in command, for poor old Dr. Routh, verging on a hundred, was an embarrassment rather than a bulwark.

In fine, Charles Reade yielded to the request of his family and his College, and "at the end of all things"—alias Feb. 2.—assumed the functions of Vice-President for a twelve month.

He rendered signal service to the College. The Commissioners were anxious to convert the Fellows into stipendiaries, at fixed salaries, in order that the balance of revenue might be available for educational and professorial objects. Some of the Fellows rather favoured this project. But Charles Reade warned them, that by so doing they would cease to be masters in their own house, and that the control of their vast estates would virtually pass from them. The contest between the College and their Parliamentary inquisitors

raged during his year of office, and continued afterwards for several years.

Three nephews were eligible for the Demyship in Charles Reade's nomination. He selected the fittest in every way, the son of his beautiful and brilliant sister Julia, Allen Gardiner the younger, who fully justified his uncle's patronage by a first-class in the schools, and a subsequent career of heroic devotion as a missionary in Chili.*

* Young Allen Gardiner had barely settled in College as Demy, when in the middle of term the papers devoted several columns to the harrowing account of the death of his father, Captain Allen F. Gardiner, R.N., on the coast of Tierra del Fuego by starvation—he attempted to obtain a settlement on the mainland for missionary purposes, but owing to some inexplicable bungling the provisions which were to have been forwarded to him and his crew never reached them. It was the habit of his son, the young Demy, immediately after morning chapel, to retire to his rooms, and read a chapter of the Bible. This voluntary act of devotion saved him a rude shock. The terrible news had been communicated to the press, and not to the martyred sailor's family; hence, Allen Gardiner was in happy ignorance of his noble father's tragic end. His friends in the junior common-room chanced to catch a glimpse of the awful news, and at once removed all newspapers from the room, so that when Allen Gardiner entered it to breakfast, he was spared a sudden blow. In the interim they hurried to Mr. R. F. Hessey,

Magdalen was for many years Charles Reade's hardest workshop. Whenever he was behindhand to any serious extent with his copy, John Brooker, his faithful servant, received a wire that his master was already *en route* from Paddington, and a braised shoulder of lamb, or mutton, with a tart to follow, was ordered for 3 p.m., the author's normal dinner hour. The rooms he occupied in No. 2 New Buildings were scantily furnished, MSS. and books littering in heaps on the floor, the walls being decorated with looking-glasses instead of pictures. During his year of Vice-Presidency he laboured unremittingly with his pen, receiving the formal visits of members of the College with Bohemian informality in his shirt-sleeves, and not quite earning the appreciation of his brother Fellows

the junior tutor, who undertook to break the news to his promising pupil, and did so with the delicacy and tact of a scholar and a gentleman. The brave fellow bore up against this crushing misfortune; but then and there registered a vow that his father should not have died in vain, a vow kept with fidelity. He founded no less than seventeen congregations on the seaboard of Chili, and only retired from that sphere of work—pre-eminently his own—when he was passed over for the Bishopric of the Falklands.

by neglecting their high-table and senior common-room. Yet such was the natural dignity of the man, that in no one instance had he to encounter familiarity or disrespect. If *en deshabille;* if seated in the centre of a chaos of paper and ink; if again so absent that he sometimes omitted to answer a direct question, he none the less held his own. His manner was far from slovenly, neither in truth was his dress, which erred in being rather *outré*. He shaved in those days punctiliously, and his linen was faultless. It was impossible for the most self-assertive to take a liberty with him; and when, on an occasion, a tradesman, whose bill had remained in abeyance for some years, thought fit to relieve his pent-up feelings at the expense of those of the Vice-President, he repented his temerity. There never was a Vice-President quite of the same pattern before him, nor will be after him. Enough, that there have been many his inferiors, and none altogether his equal, even in the art of ruling a College so as to ensure discipline without making matters disagreeable all round.

In this same year he contrived to enact the parts of diplomatist and don, playwright and novelist, with a cool and clear head. He was, moreover, still young enough to relish the cricket field and the river, and to shoot over the College estate at Tubney. Never during his fifty years of Fellowship was he on more cordial terms with the society; perhaps because they began to perceive his merit, and were wise enough to court the rising sun. He revived archery, bowls, and skittles within the College walls, and would spend the hours of the morning, when the men were undergoing the prolonged torture of the lecture-room, in pacing the entire length of the New Buildings, not under cover of the cloister, but on the grass-plat, between the New and Founder's Buildings. Strange to say, he seldom affected Addison's walk, but would tramp with a rapid shuffling step to and from the sunk fence of The Grove to the edge of the Cherwell, in utter oblivion of the scouts and others who constantly crossed his path. So far as can be judged, his plan was to think out a scene, and while thought was still hot and fresh in his memory, to dash upstairs, and commit

it to MS. with a rapidity that rendered his copy decipherable by himself only and his faithful copyist, one Saunders. He certainly resented bitterly any interruption of his reveries; and when a member of the College, however senior he might be, elected to stop his progress and essay to inveigle him in gossip, the chances were that he met with a cool, if not a rude, reception.

Oxford, moreover, was an unexceptionable place for study. The Bodleian Library with its ready and civil attendants; the splendid modern library of the Union Society; and the College Library, all gave him literary material. Eschewing Chapel and Hall, and combining, as we have endeavoured to show, for the most part work and exercise, he covered a very wide field in a very short time; for he was never idle, and to stimulate his brain drank strong tea at intervals from his three o'clock dinner till he retired to bed. It was the life of an individual, not of a gregarious, human being; of one, moreover, who conceived himself to be isolated in his academic home. Of all the Fellows then in residence, Dr. Bloxam, a gentleman who laboured incessantly in the

domain of antiquarian research, alone inspired him with interest.

Not that he ever possessed the slightest affinity with mediævalism, as such. To the past he looked as to a mine rich in dramatic material, and hence perhaps recognized in the antiquarian a man to supply him, if needful, with suitable stage accessories. It may seem very business-like to regard history as a collection of unrehearsed tragedies and comedies; yet so devoted was Charles Reade to his art, that although he hated horrors constitutionally and had fainted at the sight of blood, he blasphemed his evil fortune piteously, because of arriving on the scene of an accident five minutes too late. It was the Commemoration, and he was strolling back from Iffley with his nephews, when he remarked a huge pool of blood on the tow-path. The Exeter College barge, returning from Nuneham with a picnic-party, had been driven by a man who neglected to spare his beast. The horse waited till the rope was loosed, and then in revenge lashed out on his tormentor with his hind feet, and catching the poor wretch full on the temples, killed him then and there.

His nephews remonstrated with this strange mood of his; whereupon he rejoined, "Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures quam quæ sicut oculis subjecta fidelibus."

"But," they replied, "the sickening horror of the scene!"

"*Il faut souffrir pour être belle*," was his apology.

It was characteristic of Charles Reade's intense thoroughness that he never went to books for material, except when he could not obtain it from his own, or others', experience. His strongest scenes were those which he was able to construct out of phenomena of his own observation; and next, those which he threshed out in conversation with men who had actually witnessed them. His motto was, that you could not be *too* truthful, provided always that you could escape the error of verbosity. It was with the design of gaining impressions, to be reproduced dramatically, that he roamed from gaol to gaol, and strove to gain the confidence of gaol birds. Such an exercise must, notwithstanding, have been to him as penitential as the spectacle of a fatal accident would have

been harrowing to his feelings, for he was naturally, under a chilly and reserved exterior, one of the softest-hearted of his sex. Yet he knew, as by prescience, that the stage and dramatic narration were both destined to advance from the artificiality of contemporary writers—whose characters were fantoccini and whose plots dragged even when they did not drivel—towards accurate realism. True, he differed from the most philosophical of accurate realists in his passion for dramatic situations, even when they transgressed by sensationalism. But his ideal was closer to that of George Eliot than might have been pre-supposed, having regard to the marked distinction between their style and method; and, as we have seen, in order to follow that ideal he was ready to immolate sensibilities which naturally were most acute.

He also, who as a young undergraduate Demy had covered the panels of his College rooms with all the witticisms he heard and read, in the first days of his successful authorship began both to collect material in commonplace books, which ere his decease had swollen to huge proportions; and further to study

the canons of style and method,* or rather to frame them for his own guidance. He desired above all things to combine conciseness with perspicuity, and to write in such wise that his reader should never skip a line. To this end he scribbled memoranda for his own guidance, whenever an idea seized on his imagination. It is hardly possible to give a correct idea of the severity wherewith he was disciplining both his brain and his pen.

* Mr. Walter Besant has commented with singular felicity in 'The Gentleman's Magazine' on Charles Reade's method:—"Strength, truth, animation," he says, "these are three excellent qualities for a novelist to possess. They will not be denied to Charles Reade even by his enemies. There is, however, a great deal more. He is a scholar and a student. He says himself, 'I studied the great art of Fiction closely for fifteen years before I presumed to write a line. I was a ripe critic before I became an artist.' He has approached art therefore in the truest spirit, that of a resolute student, who knows that there is much to learn, but is conscious of his powers. I know no other example in history of a writer who deliberately proposed to become a novelist, and spent fifteen years in preparation for his work. * * * * The possession then of scholarship which gives judgment, taste, and discernment, strength of treatment, clearness of vision, fidelity of portraiture, fidelity of incident, the careful study of art, the life of action, truth in facts—these are qualities which seem by themselves to justify a place in the very first rank."

Among the undergraduates in residence in Magdalen during Charles Reade's term of office, if we except Allen Gardiner, whose labours in remote Chili will be had in remembrance when the South American Continent is civilized, two only were known to contemporary fame—"Cherry" Angell of racing reputation, and Lord Brabourne, then Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen. Both were gentlemen-commoners, and the writer has a vivid recollection of their calling to prefer a plaint against Whiting, the cook. Now Charles Reade held this honest *chef* to be nonpareil; indeed, so deeply enamoured was he of his artistic capacity, that subsequently he purchased a set of silver dishes so as to be able to have his dinner cooked in Magdalen and sent up to London by train. He received the complainants with amazing dignity—*in his shirt-sleeves*—argued the case for Whiting, and it was only when they pushed him with some delinquency our *cordon bleu* had perpetrated that he could be induced to respond, "Young gentlemen, I think Whiting deserves well of the College, but if he transgresses again I shall reluctantly be compelled to sconce him." This admiration

of the author for the cook, whose notion of a goose was that of a snowball basted with cream, was ardently reciprocated. Whiting was profoundly religious, but, like many of his class, when most in earnest could excite a smile. "Sir," said he to the writer, "your uncle has written the fifth gospel." "Indeed?" was the natural query. "Yes, sir," rejoined the worthy cook. "'It is Never too Late to Mend,' sir!"

With the termination of his year of Vice-Presidency, his official connection with Oxford ceased. He retained his five rooms in Magdalen, and visited them occasionally, preferring the depth of the long vacations, when the College was quite empty. His spell of residence, however, at any one time never exceeded six, and rarely attained to three weeks. He soon wearied of the place and its uncongenial surroundings, although anterior to 1854 he was far more comfortable in College than in Town. He himself alludes to the discomfort of his Covent Garden lodgings; and certainly those of Tom Taylor, to which he succeeded, deserved to be styled burrows in contrast with his beautiful rooms in the New Buildings,

facing on the south the cloisters and towers of ancient Magdalen, and on the north overlooking The Grove with its browsing deer, and the romantic water-walk associated with the name and fame of Addison, but equally so really with that of Collins and Christopher North. The chambers of Tom Taylor were over what was then the publishing house of Messrs. Chapman and Hall, in Piccadilly, and the bedroom was little larger than a cupboard. The situation of course was admirable from a Town point of view, but much the reverse of sanitary; indeed, the move to Bolton Row later on afforded Charles Reade the space he of all authors most needed, over and above the minimum cubic inches of oxygen essential for health and vigorous brain power. Yet it was partly in College and partly in Piccadilly that he wrote his first three novels, together with his original drama 'Gold.'

From the commencement of his acquaintance with Mrs. Seymour, who persistently spurred her friend's Pegasus, Charles Reade's life may be designated as a record conterminous with his books, plays, letters, and lawsuits. Nevertheless, on two notable occasions after his year of

Vice-Presidency, he descended on Magdalen College, as a *Deus ex machinâ*, to save the Fellows from blunders which they were only too eager to perpetrate. Not long afterwards he declared that he would write a novel called 'The President and Fellows,' merely to show the world how exceedingly silly a quasi-ecclesiastical corporation can be. The theme, however, could not have been inspiring, for the terrible menace ended as it began, in mere talk.

The first of these occasions was in 1854. Poor old Martin Joseph Routh, in his hundredth year, had ceased to exist on Christmas eve. The veneration accorded to extreme age was never more thoroughly exhibited than by the College and its individual members; from the highest to the humblest. Routh had been President sixty-three years. He baptized his wife as an infant. He admitted the grandson of Cox, the Esquire Bedell, a man he had previously, *i. e.* some sixty years before, also admitted, as chorister of the College. His regulation topic of conversation was the Young Pretender, and the Jacobite faction. His diction, when he chanced to be out of temper, which was seldom, was

as full-flavoured as that of another Martin, the fulcrum of the Reformation. He never appeared without a full-bottomed wig adorning his venerable cranium. His favourite joke was to inquire after people long since dead, and on being informed of their decease to express astonishment. He hated the tutors of the College beyond expression, and desired that Dr. Bloxam, the antiquarian, should be his successor. His politics were those of Strafford, his religion that of Laud, and it is to his influence that the American Episcopal Church is indebted for the real, or imaginary Apostolic-succession, inasmuch as he persuaded Seabury to obtain episcopal consecration from the Scotch Bishops.

This old man's autocratic temper was extraordinary.* The Cæsar of Magdalen, he was

* Very rarely Dr. Routh visited London, but when he did venture so far from the academic shades, he always travelled by a coach called the "Star." Now as time passed and competition had increased, the owners of this coach found it desirable to reduce the fares; Dr. Routh alighted, as was his wont, in Oxford Street, and was assisted respectfully by the coachman, to whom he handed £1 7*s.* 6*d.* —twenty-five shillings the fare, and half-a-crown the gratuity to John, who, as the money was being paid to him, said, "the fare, Mr. President, is reduced to a guinea."

wont to affirm that any member of the Foundation, not being a Fellow, could be turned out *nutu Præsidis.* Armed, however, as he believed himself to be, with such absolute authority, he so used it as to render his College one of the least disciplined in Oxford. When a Demy appeared three days after the commencement of term, having in fact been detained in London by the paramount claims of self-indulgence, and when the tutors suggested that the gentleman should be rusticated for this offence, Routh at once had them on the hip.

"Three days late, is he?" whimpered the old fellow in his childish treble. "Well, sirs, there has been a heavy fall of snow, and as the gentleman resides in Norfolk, no doubt the coaches have been detained along the road!"

"But," urged the tutors, "he could have reached Oxford in a few hours by railway."

"Railway?" quoth Dr. Routh, incredulously. "Ah, well, I don't know anything

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Dr. Routh paused and reflected. "Sir," he replied, "I always have paid twenty-five shillings, and I always shall." Needless to add, a reverential bow expressed the submission of the recipient to this solemn decision, by which he reaped the benefit of an extra four shillings.

about that!" and so with the typical flea in its ear minor authority was dismissed.

The old man refused to believe in the existence of the G.W.R., whose whistle he heard every day of his life.

On another occasion one of the choral clerks happened to have been in residence some three years and three quarters, but had not succeeded in passing "Smalls," the examination usually surmounted after three months' residence. The junior tutor called to request that this gentleman should be removed from the College. The venerable President at once assumed an expression of extreme astonishment. "I don't know anything about your examinations," he replied to the complaining don. "Have you anything to say as regards the gentleman's moral character or conduct?" The tutor responded in the negative. "Then," cried the President in an outburst of righteous indignation, "how dare you come here, sir, to attack a respectable member of the College? His father, sir, is a friend of my friend, the Bishop of Bath and Wells; and I will not listen, sir, to any such frivolous allegations!"

The poor human fossil was writing a book—

one of the sort that nobody reads—when the dread summons sounded; and, strange paradox, though it was virtually impossible that his life could be prolonged, everybody seemed startled by his death. It came upon the College like an earthquake; and men felt that they had lost a father, for Dr. Routh, *malgrè* his eccentricities, was the true friend of every member of his splendid foundation, and had a long memory for faces far remote from Oxford influences. Sawell, one of the senior chaplains, hurried to his bedside to kiss his cold remains, and the Fellows resolved he should have the grandest funeral that could be organized, and repose in front of the altar in the College Chapel. Charles Reade was in London labouring at 'It is Never too Late to Mend' with a good heart, thanks to the indisputable success of 'Christie Johnstone'; but no sooner did the news reach him than he hurried to Oxford by the first train. *Le roi est mort!—Vive le roi!* would be the next cry; but, under which King, Bezonian? That was the question, and one fraught with great anxiety for every Fellow of Magdalen.

The College was as yet unreformed and

unmutilated. It was still battling the Queen's Commissioners, though not with the same pluck wherewith it had resisted King James II. Much depended, therefore, on the character of the man selected for its Head, in succession to Dr. Routh. If they elected a Liberal, the Commissioners would be emboldened to increase their demands, for the rent-roll of Magdalen had risen to quite £30,000 a year, and that lump sum constituted *für plunder*. Besides, all the little colleges were bitterly envious of rich and beautiful Magdalen, and burning with anxiety that it should be despoiled. This election, therefore, was a crucial one; and Charles Reade had registered a mental resolve that he would carry his friend Bulley, a Tory, a High-Churchman, but by no means a bigot, a sound Greek scholar, and the son of the Reading Doctor, who had administered to the corporeal necessities of Ipsden House. Bulley was then senior tutor, and in respect of dignity of manner rivalled one of his sire's patients, Lord Stowell. He was reticent, cautious, and yet genial in a quiet way. He never did a foolish thing, and never said a wise one.

On the other side was Andrew Edwards, ex-Mathematical tutor, a mild reformer, and so charming a gentleman that it seems almost astonishing he was not elected by acclamation. But for his Liberal principles his claims would have outweighed those of Bulley; and, as it was, he ran him close.

Thirdly, there was the then Vice-President, Mr. Harris, who was supposed to be a more pronounced Liberal than Mr. Edwards, and withal personally acceptable to the junior Fellows. He was barely forty-two years of age, whereas Edwards was fifty-six, and Bulley forty-eight. The election, as will appear, was conducted on such lines that Mr. Harris might have come in but for Charles Reade's timely ? interference, this with every apology to the unsuccessful candidate. But first, before the new sovereign of our academical State could be elected, the obsequies of the monarch deceased had to be performed with due solemnity. Mr. Harris, as President *pro tem.*, had the arrangements in his hands, and carried them out perfectly. Unfortunately the old organ had been removed, and the glorious new instrument, the *chef-d'œuvre* of Messrs. Gray

and Davison, was not yet *in situ*, while the ante-chapel presented an appearance of unseemly litter. The choral service, therefore, was necessarily unaccompanied; but Mr. Blyth, the organist of that epoch, boasted some of the noblest treble singers in England, and certainly as the procession moved from the College Hall round the picturesque cloisters to the Chapel, the effect of Croft and Purcell's weird strains was most sublime. Among the Fellows who clustered round the gaping grave, wherein, with the proud "C" on his coffin, were deposited the remains of their President, none in his surplice and Doctor's hood looked more impressed, or presented in himself a more impressive figure, than Charles Reade. It may have occurred to some, even then, that there stood the grand man with the grand mind, who ought to have been President, the one Fellow of the entire body worthy to be the pediment of so noble a Foundation. That, however, was out of the question. They wanted a pedant for their President, and had Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron offered themselves, would have doubtless preferred some academical mediocrity. It was clearly understood that

there was to be no nonsense of merit about the Presidential election. Nobody outside the College walls had ever heard of such names as Bulley, Edwards, or Harris. They resembled nothing more than Dickens' "Noakes, or Stokes, or Brown, or Styles," all estimable gentlemen, let it be freely admitted; nevertheless, the most exalted positions in the first of English Universities ought, one would imagine, to be reserved for those who have made their mark, and earned an undying reputation. As it was, the choice lay between three worthy pigmies; and now let us hear what the mammoth who was backer of one of these pigmies has to say:

"It is past one o'clock. I have been employed actively ever since nine, driving an idea into some of the thickest skulls I have ever encountered. It is a most fortunate thing for the Rev. F. Bulley that I came down here this evening. I don't know whether he will be President of Magdalen or not; but this I know, that but for me some five to seven of his supporters would have been cajoled into cutting his throat to-morrow. I will explain this to you

at a future time. It is a matter of figures, very curious, and may perhaps amuse you to see the blunder they were about to fall into—

"*Tenez.* I will try and explain it now:

"There are 37 Fellows, all of whom are compelled in the first instance to give two distinct votes. The result of this process is, that there will be at the head of the poll two Fellows. Then these two Fellows are sent up to the 13 senior Fellows, who choose one of them for President.

"The struggle lies between three men—Bulley (my friend and the favourite), Edwards, and Harris. Now, out of the 37 men I believe there are 20 men who wish Bulley to be President; and if the said Bulley could be placed first, or even second upon the first process, there is no doubt that the 13 seniors would choose him. But here is the grand oversight they have all made. Harris men have been cajoling Bulley's men to give Harris or Edwards their second vote, and most have agreed to; but Harris' men may give all their second votes to Edwards, and Edwards' *vice versâ* to Harris, and in point of fact this

will be the case. Now see the result of this:

"Bulley's 20 friends register for Bulley twenty votes, for Edwards ten, and for Harris ten. Seventeen men remain, of whom 12 are Harris' friends, five Edwards'; but out of this number, who all hate Bulley, no one vote will go to Bulley, but 17 to Harris, and 17 to Edwards.

"Result. Harris, 27 votes, Edwards, 27 votes, and Bulley, 20.

"N.B. Each Fellow *must* vote for two people.

Upon these figures Bulley would never be sent up to the 13 seniors at all, and either Harris or Edwards must be the President.

"The error Bulley's friends have all fallen into may be thus stated:

"Thirty-seven men, with two votes each, are 74 votes; but Bulley's friends have counted them as only 37 votes, and his 20 votes have appeared to make him safe, and so 20 out of 37 would; but it is 20 out of 74, and the odd 54 will put two men above Bulley and destroy him.

"Here is another way of stating it. Bulley has more friends than Harris and Edwards put together; but Harris and Edwards have

no enemies, and Bulley has 17 enemies who cabal to keep him out *coute que coute*, whereas Bulley's poor simpletons give their second votes indiscriminately to Harris and Edwards, or were going to; but I have stopped some of them, thank Heaven. I wish you had seen me attacking this blunder. I wish you had seen the pains it cost me to make them see it.

"I wish you had seen the complacent supineness of Bulley's friends, their cool ridicule of the idea that with 20 friends out of 37 he could run any risk. I wish you could have seen their faces as I succeeded in convincing them, not only that their friend was not safe if they played the fool with their second votes, but that by G— he *had not the ghost of a chance*, which is the plain fact. I was hours before I could get them to realize this; however, I swore in a little band who promised me to neutralize their second vote, and to enforce the necessity of this on their friends. I think we shall certainly neutralize half; in other words, I hope out of Bulley's 20 friends, 10 will now give him *virtual plumpers* by giving their second vote to any one except Edwards or Harris. Thus Bulley will have 20 votes;

10 votes will be put out of the play, and 44 will remain for Edwards and Harris, and here is a grand chance for Bulley. There will be a few muddle-heads in the enemies' camp as well as ours, and if they do not divide their 44 votes *cetera desunt.*"

The two candidates sent up to the 13 Seniors for their final decision were Bulley and Edwards, and the former scored seven to the latter's five. Harris, as Vice-President, had the determining vote, but had he gone for Edwards, Bulley would still have scored a majority of one. Well might that worthy gentleman have exclaimed *sic me servavit Apollo;* for if Charles Reade, D.C.L., had not come down by the evening train in the nick of time, Mr. Harris, at present the esteemed pastor of Winterbourne Basset, would now be President of Magdalen.

The next occasion when Charles Reade interposed his brain to safeguard the interests of his brother Fellows, was about two years later. From 1851, when President Routh openly defied the Royal Commission, to 1858, when a compromise between the views of the Commissioners and those of the College was

finally settled, everything was in abeyance. The Commissioners, being rapacious, were more anxious to abstract a huge slice of the endowment of Magdalen than to reform or reorganize the College itself. To this end they offered the governing body, *i. e.*, the President and Fellows, a tempting bait. Each of these privileged persons in the future was to draw a fixed income from the College revenues, and this stipend was to be put at a higher figure than the existing dividends. In return, the said President and Fellows were to hand over the management and disposition of their estates to the Commissioners. They were no longer to be their own masters, but, as Charles Reade phrased it, to be stipendiaries in their own house. The Commission, however, had shown too much of its hand. One of its propositions was to suspend, or—in plain English—abrogate, ten Fellowships. Another was to found three Professorships out of the monies saved by this interference with the Founder's arrangements. Now, it was very easy on these lines to make an arithmetic sum of the loss and gain to the dividends of the Fellows by some such experiment; and

this same sum showed, that after the suppression of the ten Fellowships and the foundation of three Professorships at £600 a year each, the dividend would go up about 30 per cent. Yet, incredible though it may seem, some of the intelligent Fellows were ardently anxious to obliterate themselves, to barter away the independence of their College, and to lose money to the tune of 30 per cent., in order to gain an apparently immediate increment of a few sovereigns. There is no limit to human cupidity or human folly, and this piece of avaricious foolery simply incensed Charles Reade, who came down to fight the battle of common-sense against uncommon idiotcy. He bore down all opposition with Rupertlike impetuosity, and had the satisfaction of feeling that his brain had been of real service to a set of people who seemed singularly deficient in that particular.

This is his account of his passage-at-arms. It reads like Veni, vidi, vici!

"We have been hard at it from 11 till four. As I dine with the President (Bulley), I sit down now to scratch off a line before it is too late.

"Well, I made a *speech*, a long speech; and carried the College with me like one man.

"I was opposed by a Fellow that is supposed to be influential; but I carried them with me, 19 votes to *one*, and sent up an amendment on a vital clause.

"If the Commissioners receive it, I may say;

"'I have saved the College that has been a good mother to me since I was 17 years of age.' The worst is, this has interrupted my story, but I hardly thought of Bentley once all day. Put that against it."

This success at a critical College meeting placed him on good terms with Magdalen, and induced him to dedicate the novel to which this letter refers, to

"*That ancient, learned, and most hospitable House.*"

Would that the kindly epithets had lasted!

END OF VOL. I.